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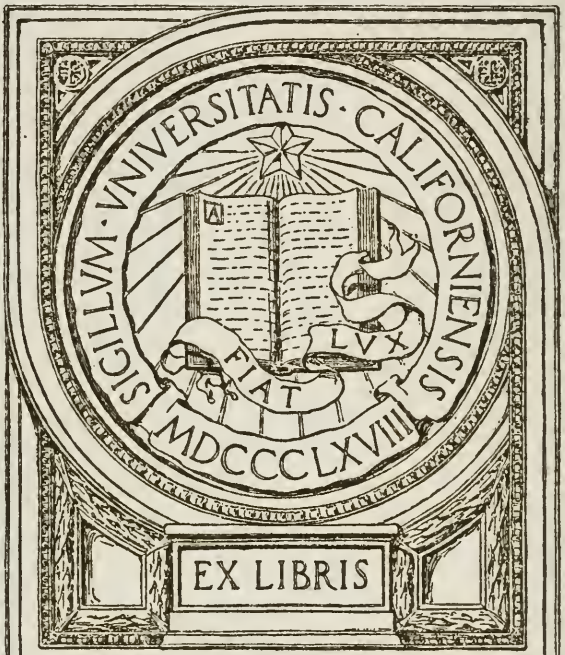

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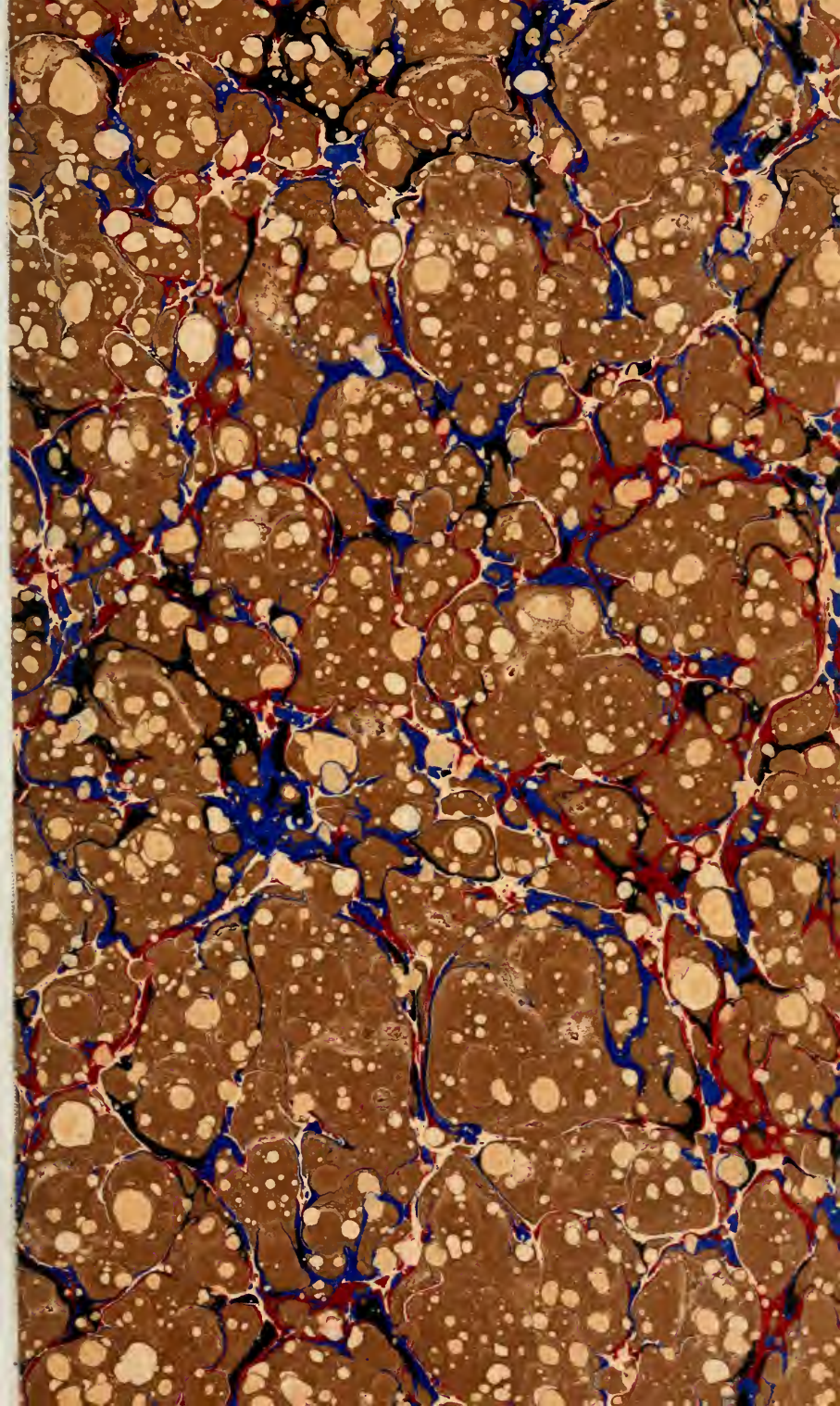

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THE COMEDY OF HUMAN LIFE

By H. DE BALZAC

SCENES FROM PRIVATE LIFE

THE MARRIAGE CONTRACT

A DOUBLE LIFE

THE PEACE OF A HOME

BALZAC'S NOVELS.

Translated by Miss K. P. WORMELEY.

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BEATRIX.
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ROBERTS BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS,
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HONORÉ DE BALZAC

TRANSLATED BY

KATHARINE PRESCOTT WORMELEY

THE MARRIAGE CONTRACT

ROBERTS BROTHERS

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1895

GIFT OF
John H Mee

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THE MARRIAGE CONTRACT.

TO ROSSINI.

I.

PRO AND CON.

Monsieur de Manerville, the father, was a worthy Norman gentleman, well known to the Maréchal de Richelieu, who married him to one of the richest heiresses of Bordeaux in the days when the old duke reigned in Guienne as governor. The Norman then sold the estate he owned in Bessin, and became a Gascon, allured by the beauty of the château de Lanstrac, a delightful residence owned by his wife. During the last days of the reign of Louis XV., he bought the post of major of the Gate Guards, and lived till 1813, having by great good luck escaped the dangers of the Revolution in the following manner.

Toward the close of the year, 1790, he went to Martinque, where his wife had interests, leaving the management of his property in Gascogne to an honest man, a notary's clerk, named Mathias, who was inclined to — or at any rate did — give into the new ideas. On his return the Comte de Manerville found his possessions

intact and well-managed. This sound result was the fruit produced by grafting the Gascon on the Norman.

Madame de Manerville died in 1810. Having learned the importance of worldly goods through the dissipations of his youth, and, giving them, like many another old man, a higher place than they really hold in life, Monsieur de Manerville became increasingly economical, miserly, and sordid. Without reflecting that the avarice of parents prepares the way for the prodigalities of children, he allowed almost nothing to his son, although that son was an only child.

Paul de Manerville, coming home from the college of Vendôme in 1810, lived under close paternal discipline for three years. The tyranny by which the old man of seventy oppressed his heir influenced, necessarily, a heart and a character which were not yet formed. Paul, the son, without lacking the physical courage which is vital in the air of Gascony, dared not struggle against his father, and consequently lost that faculty of resistance which begets moral courage. His thwarted feelings were driven to the depths of his heart, where they remained without expression; later, when he felt them to be out of harmony with the maxims of the world, he could only think rightly and act mistakenly. He was capable of fighting for a mere word or look, yet he trembled at the thought of dismissing a servant, — his timidity showing itself in those contests only which required a persistent will. Capable of doing great things to fly from persecution, he would never have prevented it by systematic opposition, nor have faced it with the steady employment of force of will. Timid in thought, bold in actions, he

long preserved that inward simplicity which makes a man the dupe and the voluntary victim of things against which certain souls hesitate to revolt, preferring to endure them rather than complain. He was, in point of fact, imprisoned in his father's old mansion, for he had not enough money to consort with young men; he envied their pleasures while unable to share them.

The old gentleman took him every evening, in an old carriage drawn by ill-harnessed old horses, attended by ill-dressed old servants, to royalist houses, where he met a society composed of the relics of the parliamentary nobility and the martial nobility. These two nobilities coalescing after the Revolution for the purpose of resisting imperial influence, had now transformed themselves into a landed aristocracy. Crushed by the vast and swelling fortunes of the maritime cities, this Faubourg Saint-Germain of Bordeaux responded by lofty disdain to the sumptuous displays of commerce, government administrations, and the military. Too young to understand social distinctions and the necessities underlying the apparent assumption which they create, Paul was bored to death among these ancients, unaware that the connections of his youth would eventually secure to him that aristocratic pre-eminence which Frenchmen will forever desire.

He found some slight compensations for the dulness of these evenings in certain manual exercises which always delight young men, and which his father enjoined upon him. The old gentleman considered that to know the art of fencing and the use of arms, to ride well on horseback, to play tennis, to acquire good

manners, — in short, to possess all the frivolous accomplishments of the old nobility, — made a young man of the present day a finished gentleman. Accordingly, Paul took a fencing-lesson every morning, went to the riding-school, and practised in a pistol-gallery. The rest of his time he spent in reading novels, for his father would never have allowed the more abstruse studies now considered necessary to finish an education.

So monotonous a life would soon have killed the poor youth if the death of the old man had not delivered him from this tyranny at the moment when it was becoming intolerable. Paul found himself in possession of considerable capital, accumulated by his father's avarice, together with landed estates in the best possible condition. But he now held Bordeaux in horror; neither did he like Lanstrac, where his father had taken him to spend the summers, employing his whole time from morning till night in hunting.

As soon as the estate was fairly settled, the young heir, eager for enjoyment, bought consols with his capital, left the management of the landed property to old Mathias, his father's notary, and spent the next six years away from Bordeaux. At first he was attached to the French embassy at Naples; after that he was secretary of legation at Madrid, and then in London, — making in this way the tour of Europe.

After seeing the world and life, after losing several illusions, after dissipating all the loose capital which his father had amassed, there came a time when, in order to continue his way of life, Paul was forced to draw upon the territoral revenues which his notary was laying by. At this critical moment, seized by one of

the so-called virtuous impulses, he determined to leave Paris, return to Bordeaux, regulate his affairs, lead the life of a country gentleman at Lanstrac, improve his property, marry, and become, in the end, a deputy.

Paul was a count; nobility was once more of matrimonial value; he could, and he ought to make a good marriage. While many women desire a title, many others like to marry a man to whom a knowledge of life is familiar. Now Paul had acquired, in exchange for the sum of seven hundred thousand francs squandered in six years, that possession, which cannot be bought and is practically of more value than gold and silver; a knowledge which exacts long study, probation, examinations, friends, enemies, acquaintances, certain manners, elegance of form and demeanor, a graceful and euphonious name, — a knowledge, moreover, which means many love-affairs, duels, bets lost on a race-course, disillusions, deceptions, annoyances, toils, and a vast variety of undigested pleasures. In short, he had become what is called elegant. But in spite of his mad extravagance he had never made himself a mere fashionable man. In the burlesque army of men of the world, the man of fashion holds the place of a marshal of France, the man of elegance is the equivalent of a lieutenant-general. Paul enjoyed his lesser reputation, of elegance, and knew well how to sustain it. His servants were well-dressed, his equipages were cited, his suppers had a certain vogue; in short, his bachelor establishment was counted among the seven or eight whose splendor equalled that of the finest houses in Paris.

But — he had not caused the wretchedness of any

woman; he gambled without losing; his luck was not notorious; he was far too upright to deceive or mislead any one, no matter who, even a wanton; never did he leave his billets-doux lying about, and he possessed no coffer or desk for love-letters which his friends were at liberty to read while he tied his cravat or trimmed his beard. Moreover, not willing to dip into his Guienne property, he had not that bold extravagance which leads to great strokes and calls attention at any cost to the proceedings of a young man. Neither did he borrow money, but he had the folly to lend to friends, who then deserted him and spoke of him no more either for good or evil. He seemed to have regulated his dissipations methodically. The secret of his character lay in his father's tyranny, which had made him, as it were, a social mongrel.

So, one morning, he said to a friend named de Marsay, who afterwards became celebrated: —

"My dear fellow, life has a meaning."

"You must be twenty-seven years of age before you can find it out," replied de Marsay, laughing.

"Well, I am twenty-seven; and precisely because I am twenty-seven I mean to live the life of a country gentleman at Lanstrac. I'll transport my belongings to Bordeaux into my father's old mansion, and I'll spend three months of the year in Paris in this house, which I shall keep."

"Will you marry?"

"I shall marry."

"I'm your friend, as you know, my old Paul," said de Marsay, after a moment's silence, "and I say to you: settle down into a worthy father and husband

and you 'll be ridiculous for the rest of your days. If you could be happy and ridiculous, the thing might be thought of ; but you will not be happy. You have n't a strong enough wrist to drive a household. I 'll do you justice and say you are a perfect horseman ; no one knows as well as you how to pick up or throw down the reins, and make a horse prance, and sit firm to the saddle. But, my dear fellow, marriage is another thing. I see you now, led along at a slapping pace by Madame la Comtesse de Manerville, going whither you would not, oftener at a gallop than a trot, and presently unhorsed ! — yes, unhorsed into a ditch and your legs broken. Listen to me. You still have some forty-odd thousand francs a year from your property in the Gironde. Good. Take your horses and servants and furnish your house in Bordeaux ; you can be king of Bordeaux, you can promulgate there the edicts that we put forth in Paris ; you can be the correspondent of our stupidities. Very good. Play the rake in the provinces ; better still, commit follies ; follies may win you celebrity. But — don't marry. Who marries now-a-days ? Only merchants, for the sake of their capital, or to be two to drag the cart ; only peasants who want to produce children to work for them ; only brokers and notaries who want a wife's *dot* to pay for their practice ; only miserable kings who are forced to continue their miserable dynasties. But we are exempt from the pack, and you want to shoulder it ! And why *do* you want to marry ? You ought to give your best friend your reasons. In the first place, if you marry an heiress as rich as yourself, eighty thousand francs a year for two is not the same thing as forty thousand

francs a year for one, because the two are soon three or four when the children come. You have n't surely any love for that silly race of Manerville which would only hamper you? Are you ignorant of what a father and mother have to be? Marriage, my old Paul, is the silliest of all the social immolations; our children alone profit by it, and don't know its price till their horses are nibbling the flowers on our grave. Do you regret your father, that old tyrant who made your first years wretched? How can you be sure that your children will love you? The very care you take of their education, your precautions for their happiness, your necessary sternness will lessen their affection. Children love a weak or a prodigal father, whom they will despise in after years. You 'll live betwixt fear and contempt. No man is a good head of a family merely because he wants to be. Look round on all our friends and name to me one whom you would like to have for a son. We have known a good many who dishonor their names. Children, my dear Paul, are the most difficult kind of merchandise to take care of. Yours, you think, will be angels; well, so be it! Have you ever sounded the gulf which lies between the lives of a bachelor and a married man? Listen. As a bachelor you can say to yourself: 'I shall never exhibit more than a certain amount of the ridiculous; the public will think of me what I choose it to think.' Married, you 'll drop into the infinitude of the ridiculous! Bachelor, you can make your own happiness; you enjoy some to-day, you do without it to-morrow; married, you must take it as it comes; and the day you want it you will have to go without it. Marry, and you 'll grow a blockhead;

you 'll calculate dowries; you 'll talk morality, public and religious; you 'll think young men immoral and dangerous; in short, you 'll become a social academician. It 's pitiable! The old bachelor whose property the heirs are waiting for, who fights to his last breath with his nurse for a spoonful of drink, is blest in comparison with a married man. I 'm not speaking of all that will happen to annoy, bore, irritate, coerce, oppose, tyrannize, narcotize, paralyze, and idiotize a man in marriage, in that struggle of two beings always in one another's presence, bound forever, who have coupled each other under the strange impression that they were suited. No, to tell you those things would be merely a repetition of Boileau, and we know him by heart. Still, I 'll forgive your absurd idea if you will promise me to marry *en grand seigneur;* to entail your property; to have two legitimate children; to give your wife a house and household absolutely distinct from yours; to meet her only in society, and never to return from a journey without sending her a courier to announce it. Two hundred thousand francs a year will suffice for such a life and your antecedents will enable you to marry some rich English woman hungry for a title. That 's an aristocratic life which seems to me thoroughly French; the only life in which we can retain the respect and friendship of a woman; the only life which distinguishes a man from the present crowd, — in short, the only life for which a young man should even think of resigning his bachelor blessings. Thus established, the Comte de Manerville may advise his epoch, place himself above the world, and be nothing less than a minister or an ambassador. Ridicule can never touch

him; he has gained the social advantages of marriage while keeping all the privileges of a bachelor."

"But, my good friend, I am not de Marsay; I am plainly, as you yourself do me the honor to say, Paul de Manerville, worthy father and husband, deputy of the Centre, possibly peer of France, — a destiny extremely commonplace; but I am modest and I resign myself."

"Yes, but your wife," said the pitiless de Marsay, "will she resign herself?"

"My wife, my dear fellow, will do as I wish."

"Ah! my poor friend, is that where you are? Adieu, Paul. Henceforth, I refuse to respect you. One word more, however, for I cannot agree coldly to your abdication. Look and see in what the strength of our position lies. A bachelor with only six thousand francs a year remaining to him has at least his reputation for elegance and the memory of success. Well, even that fantastic shadow has enormous value in it. Life still offers many chances to the unmarried man. Yes, he can aim at anything. But marriage, Paul, is the social 'Thus far shalt thou go and no farther.' Once married you can never be anything but what you then are — unless your wife should deign to care for you."

"But," said Paul, "you are crushing me down with exceptional theories. I am tired of living for others; of having horses merely to exhibit them; of doing all things for the sake of what may be said of them; of wasting my substance to keep fools from crying out: 'Dear, dear! Paul is still driving the same carriage. What has he done with his fortune? Does he squander it? Does he gamble at the Bourse? No, he's a

millionnaire. Madame such a one is mad about him. He sent to England for a harness which is certainly the handsomest in all Paris. The four-horse equipages of Messieurs de Marsay and de Manerville were much noticed at Longchamps; the harness was perfect' — in short, the thousand silly things with which a crowd of idiots lead us by the nose. Believe me, my dear Henri, I admire your power, but I don't envy it. You know how to judge of life; you think and act as a statesman; you are able to place yourself above all ordinary laws, received ideas, adopted conventions, and acknowledged prejudices; in short, you can grasp the profits of a situation in which I should find nothing but ill-luck. Your cool, systematic, possibly true deductions are, to the eyes of the masses, shockingly immoral. I belong to the masses. I must play my game of life according to the rules of the society in which I am forced to live. While putting yourself above all human things on peaks of ice, you still have feelings; but as for me, I should freeze to death. The life of that great majority, to which I belong in my commonplace way, is made up of emotions of which I now have need. Often a man coquets with a dozen women and obtains none. Then, whatever be his strength, his cleverness, his knowledge of the world, he undergoes convulsions, in which he is crushed as between two gates. For my part, I like the peaceful chances and changes of life; I want that wholesome existence in which we find a woman always at our side."

"A trifle indecorous, your marriage!" exclaimed de Marsay.

Paul was not to be put out of countenance, and continued: "Laugh if you like; I shall feel myself a happy man when my valet enters my room in the morning and says: 'Madame is awaiting monsieur for breakfast;' happier still at night, when I return to find a heart —"

"Altogether indecorous, my dear Paul. You are not yet moral enough to marry."

"— a heart in which to confide my interests and my secrets. I wish to live in such close union with a woman that our affection shall not depend upon a yes or a no, or be open to the disillusions of love. In short, I have the necessary courage to become, as you say, a worthy husband and father. I feel myself fitted for family joys; I wish to put myself under the conditions prescribed by society; I desire to have a wife and children."

"You remind me of a hive of honey-bees! But go your way, you 'll be a dupe all your life. Ha, ha! you wish to marry to have a wife! In other words, you wish to solve satisfactorily to your own profit the most difficult problem presented by those bourgeois morals which were created by the French Revolution; and, what is more, you mean to begin your attempt by a life of retirement. Do you think your wife won't crave the life you say you despise? Will *she* be disgusted with it, as you are? If you won't accept the noble conjugality just formulated for your benefit by your friend de Marsay, listen, at any rate, to his final advice. Remain a bachelor for the next thirteen years; amuse yourself like a lost soul; then, at forty, on your first attack of gout, marry a widow of thirty-six.

Then you may possibly be happy. If you now take a young girl to wife, you 'll die a madman."

"*Ah ça!* tell me why!" cried Paul, somewhat piqued.

"My dear fellow," replied de Marsay, "Boileau's satire against women is a tissue of poetical commonplaces. Why should n't women have defects? Why condemn them for having the most obvious thing in human nature? To my mind, the problem of marriage is not at all at the point where Boileau puts it. Do you suppose that marriage is the same thing as love, and that being a man suffices to make a wife love you? Have you gathered nothing in your boudoir experience but pleasant memories? I tell you that everything in our bachelor life leads to fatal errors in the married man unless he is a profound observer of the human heart. In the happy days of his youth a man, by the caprice of our customs, is always lucky; he triumphs over women who are all ready to be triumphed over and who obey their own desires. One thing after another — the obstacles created by the laws, the sentiments and natural defences of women — all engender a mutuality of sensations which deceives superficial persons as to their future relations in marriage, where obstacles no longer exist, where the wife submits to love instead of permitting it, and frequently repulses pleasure instead of desiring it. Then, the whole aspect of a man's life changes. The bachelor, who is free and without a care, need never fear repulsion; in marriage, repulsion is almost certain and irreparable. It may be possible for a lover to make a woman reverse an unfavorable decision, but such a change, my dear

Paul, is the Waterloo of husbands. Like Napoleon, the husband is thenceforth condemned to victories which, in spite of their number, do not prevent the first defeat from crushing him. The woman, so flattered by the perseverance, so delighted with the ardor of a lover, calls the same things brutality in a husband. You, who talk of marrying, and who will marry, have you ever meditated on the Civil Code? I myself have never muddied my feet in that hovel of commentators, that garret of gossip, called the Law-school. I have never so much as opened the Code; but I see its application on the vitals of society. The Code, my dear Paul, makes woman a ward; it considers her a child, a minor. Now how must we govern children? By fear. In that one word, Paul, is the curb of the beast. Now, feel your own pulse! Have you the strength to play the tyrant, — you, so gentle, so kind a friend, so confiding; you, at whom I have laughed, but whom I love, and love enough to reveal to you my science? For this is science. Yes, it proceeds from a science which the Germans are already calling Anthropology. Ah! if I had not already solved the mystery of life by pleasure, if I had not a profound antipathy for those who think instead of act, if I did not despise the ninnies who are silly enough to believe in the truth of a book, when the sands of the African deserts are made of the ashes of I know not how many unknown and pulverized Londons, Romes, Venices, and Parises, I would write a book on modern marriages made under the influence of the Christian system, and I'd stick a lantern on that heap of sharp stones among which lie the votaries of the social *multiplicamini*. But the

question is, Does humanity require even an hour of my time? And besides, is n't the more reasonable use of ink that of snaring hearts by writing love-letters? — Well, shall you bring the Comtesse de Manerville here, and let us see her?"

"Perhaps," said Paul.

"We shall still be friends," said de Marsay.

"If —" replied Paul.

"Don't be uneasy; we will treat you politely, as Maison-Rouge treated the English at Fontenoy."

II.

THE PINK OF FASHION.

Though the foregoing conversation affected the Comte de Manerville somewhat, he made it a point of duty to carry out his intentions, and he returned to Bordeaux during the winter of the year 1821.

The expenses he incurred in restoring and furnishing his family mansion sustained the reputation for elegance which had preceded him. Introduced through his former connections to the royalist society of Bordeaux, to which he belonged as much by his personal opinions as by his name and fortune, he soon obtained a fashionable pre-eminence. His knowledge of life, his manners, his Parisian acquirements enchanted the faubourg Saint-Germain of Bordeaux. An old marquise made use of a term formerly in vogue at court to express the flowery beauty of the fops and beaux of the olden time, whose language and demeanor were social laws: she called him "the pink of fashion." The liberal clique caught up the word and used it satirically as a nickname, while the royalist party continued to employ it in good faith.

Paul de Manerville acquitted himself gloriously of the obligations imposed by his flowery title. It happened to him, as to many a mediocre actor, that the day when the public granted him their full attention

he became, one may almost say, superior. Feeling at his ease, he displayed the fine qualities which accompanied his defects. His wit had nothing sharp or bitter in it; his manners were not supercilious; his intercourse with women expressed the respect they like, — it was neither too deferential, nor too familiar; his foppery went no farther than a care for his personal appearance which made him agreeable; he showed consideration for rank; he allowed young men a certain freedom, to which his Parisian experience assigned due limits; though skilful with sword and pistol, he was noted for a feminine gentleness for which others were grateful. His medium height and plumpness (which had not yet increased into obesity, an obstacle to personal elegance) did not prevent his outer man from playing the part of a Bordelais Brummell. A white skin tinged with the hues of health, handsome hands and feet, blue eyes with long lashes, black hair, graceful motions, a chest voice which kept to its middle tones and vibrated in the listener's heart, harmonized well with his sobriquet. Paul was indeed that delicate flower which needs such careful culture, the qualities of which display themselves only in a moist and suitable soil, — a flower which rough treatment dwarfs, which the hot sun burns, and a frost lays low. He was one of those men made to receive happiness, rather than to give it; who have something of the woman in their nature, wishing to be divined, understood, encouraged; in short, a man to whom conjugal love ought to come as a providence.

If such a character creates difficulties in private life, it is gracious and full of attraction for the world.

Consequently, Paul had great success in the narrow social circle of the provinces, where his mind, always, so to speak, in half-tints, was better appreciated than in Paris.

The arrangement of his house and the restoration of the château de Lanstrac, where he introduced the comfort and luxury of an English country-house, absorbed the capital saved by his notary during the preceding six years. Reduced now to his strict income of forty-odd thousand a year, he thought himself wise and prudent in so regulating his household as not to exceed it.

After publicly exhibiting his equipages, entertaining the most distinguished young men of the place, and giving various hunting parties on the estate at Lanstrac, Paul saw very plainly that provincial life would never do without marriage. Too young to employ his time in miserly occupations, or in trying to interest himself in the speculative improvements in which provincials sooner or later engage (compelled thereto by the necessity of establishing their children), he soon felt the need of that variety of distractions a habit of which becomes at last the very life of a Parisian. A name to preserve, property to transmit to heirs, social relations to be created by a household where the principal families of the neighborhood could assemble, and a weariness of all irregular connections, were not, however, the determining reasons of his matrimonial desires. From the time he first returned to the provinces he had been secretly in love with the queen of Bordeaux, the great beauty, Mademoiselle Évangélista.

About the beginning of the century, a rich Spaniard,

named Évangélista, established himself in Bordeaux, where his letters of recommendation, as well as his large fortune, gave him an entrance to the salons of the nobility. His wife contributed greatly to maintain him in the good graces of an aristocracy which may perhaps have adopted him in the first instance merely to pique the society of the class below them. Madame Évangélista, who belonged to the Casa-Reale, an illustrious family of Spain, was a creole, and, like all women served by slaves, she lived as a great lady, knew nothing of the value of money, repressed no whims, even the most expensive, finding them ever satisfied by an adoring husband who generously concealed from her knowledge the running-gear of the financial machine. Happy in finding her pleased with Bordeaux, where his interests obliged him to live, the Spaniard bought a house, set up a household, received in much style, and gave many proofs of possessing a fine taste in all things. Thus, from 1800 to 1812, Monsieur and Madame Évangélista were objects of great interest to the community of Bordeaux.

The Spaniard died in 1813, leaving his wife a widow at thirty-two years of age, with an immense fortune and the prettiest little girl in the world, a child of eleven, who promised to be, and did actually become, a most accomplished young woman. Clever as Madame Évangélista was, the Restoration altered her position; the royalist party cleared its ranks and several of the old families left Bordeaux. Though the head and hand of her husband were lacking in the direction of her affairs, for which she had hitherto shown the indifference of a creole and the inaptitude of

a lackadaisical woman, she was determined to make no change in her manner of living. At the period when Paul resolved to return to his native town, Mademoiselle Natalie Évangélista was a remarkably beautiful young girl, and, apparently, the richest match in Bordeaux, where the steady diminution of her mother's capital was unknown. In order to prolong her reign, Madame Évangélista had squandered enormous sums. Brilliant fêtes and the continuation of an almost regal style of living kept the public in its past belief as to the wealth of the Spanish family.

Natalie was now in her nineteenth year, but no proposal of marriage had as yet reached her mother's ear. Accustomed to gratify her fancies, Mademoiselle Évangélista wore cashmeres and jewels, and lived in a style of luxury which alarmed all speculative suitors in a region and at a period when sons were as calculating as their parents. The fatal remark, "None but a prince can afford to marry Mademoiselle Évangélista," circulated among the salons and the cliques. Mothers of families, dowagers who had granddaughters to establish, young girls jealous of Natalie, whose elegance and tyrannical beauty annoyed them, took pains to envenom this opinion with treacherous remarks. When they heard a possible suitor say with ecstatic admiration, as Natalie entered a ball-room, "Heavens, how beautiful she is!" "Yes," the mammas would answer, "but expensive." If some new-comer thought Mademoiselle Évangélista bewitching and said to a marriageable man that he could n't do better, "Who would be bold enough," some woman would reply, "to marry a girl whose mother gives her a thou-

sand francs a month for her toilet, — a girl who has horses and a maid of her own, and wears laces? Yes, her *peignoirs* are trimmed with mechlin. The price of her washing would support the household of a clerk. She wears pelerines in the morning which actually cost six francs to get up."

These, and other speeches said occasionally in the form of praise extinguished the desires that some men might have had to marry the beautiful Spanish girl. Queen of every ball, accustomed to flattery, *blasée* with the smiles and the admiration which followed her every step, Natalie, nevertheless, knew nothing of life. She lived as the bird which flies, as the flower that blooms, finding every one about her eager to do her will. She was ignorant of the price of things; she knew neither the value of money, nor whence it came, how it should be managed, and how spent. Possibly she thought that every household had cooks and coachmen, lady's-maids and footmen, as the fields have hay and the trees their fruits. To her, beggars and paupers, fallen trees and waste lands seemed in the same category. Pampered and petted as her mother's hope, no fatigue was allowed to spoil her pleasure. Thus she bounded through life as a courser on his steppe, unbridled and unshod.

Six months after Paul's arrival the Pink of Fashion and the Queen of Balls met in presence of the highest society of the town of Bordeaux. The two flowers looked at each other with apparent coldness, and mutually thought each other charming. Interested in watching the effects of the meeting, Madame Évangélista divined in the expression of Paul's eyes the

feelings within him, and she muttered to herself, "He will be my son-in-law." Paul, on the other hand, said to himself, as he looked at Natalie, "She will be my wife."

The wealth of the Évangélistas, proverbial in Bordeaux, had remained in Paul's mind as a memory of his childhood. Thus the pecuniary conditions were known to him from the start, without necessitating those discussions and inquiries which are as repugnant to a timid mind as to a proud one. When some persons attempted to say to Paul a few flattering phrases as to Natalie's manner, language, and beauty, ending by remarks, cruelly calculated to deter him, on the lavish extravagance of the Évangélistas, the Pink of Fashion replied with a disdain that was well-deserved by such provincial pettiness. This method of receiving such speeches soon silenced them; for he now set the tone to the ideas and language as well as to the manners of those about him. He had imported from his travels a certain development of the Britannic personality with its icy barriers, also a tone of Byronian pessimism as to life, together with English plate, boot-polish, ponies, yellow gloves, cigars, and the habit of galloping.

It thus happened that Paul escaped the discouragements hitherto presented to marriageable men by dowagers and young girls. Madame Évangélista began by asking him to formal dinners on various occasions. The Pink of Fashion would not, of course, miss festivities to which none but the most distinguished young men of the town were bidden. In spite of the coldness that Paul assumed, which deceived neither

mother nor daughter, he was drawn, step by step, into the path of marriage. Sometimes as he passed in his tilbury, or rode by on his fine English horse, he heard the young men of his acquaintance say to one another: —

"There 's a lucky man. He is rich and handsome, and is to marry, so they say, Mademoiselle Évangélista. There are some men for whom the world seems made."

When he met the Évangélistas he felt proud of the particular distinction which mother and daughter imparted to their bows. If Paul had not secretly, within his heart, fallen in love with Mademoiselle Natalie, society would certainly have married him to her in spite of himself. Society, which never causes good, is the accomplice of much evil; then when it beholds the evil it has hatched maternally, it rejects and revenges it. Society in Bordeaux, attributing a *dot* of a million to Mademoiselle Évangélista, bestowed it upon Paul without awaiting the consent of either party. Their fortunes, so it was said, agreed as well as their persons. Paul had the same habits of luxury and elegance in the midst of which Natalie had been brought up. He had just arranged for himself a house such as no other man in Bordeaux could have offered her. Accustomed to Parisian expenses and the caprices of Parisian women, he alone was fitted to meet the pecuniary difficulties which were likely to follow this marriage with a girl who was as much of a creole and a great lady as her mother. Where they themselves, remarked the marriageable men, would have been ruined, the Comte de Manerville, rich as he was, could evade disaster. In short, the marriage was made. Persons in the highest

royalist circles said a few engaging words to Paul which flattered his vanity: —

"Every one gives you Mademoiselle Évangélista. If you marry her you will do well. You could not find, even in Paris, a more delightful girl. She is beautiful, graceful, elegant, and takes after the Casa-Reales through her mother. You will make a charming couple; you have the same tastes, the same desires in life, and you will certainly have the most agreeable house in Bordeaux. Your wife need only bring her night-cap; all is ready for her. You are fortunate indeed in such a mother-in-law. A woman of intelligence, and very adroit, she will be a great help to you in public life, to which you ought to aspire. Besides, she has sacrificed everything to her daughter, whom she adores, and Natalie will, no doubt, prove a good wife, for she loves her mother. You must soon bring the matter to a conclusion."

"That is all very well," replied Paul, who, in spite of his love, was desirous of keeping his freedom of action, "but I must be sure that the conclusion shall be a happy one."

He now went frequently to Madame Évangélista's, partly to occupy his vacant hours, which were harder for him to employ than for most men. There alone he breathed the atmosphere of grandeur and luxury to which he was accustomed.

At forty years of age, Madame Évangélista was beautiful, with the beauty of those glorious summer sunsets which crown a cloudless day. Her spotless reputation had given an endless topic of conversation to the Bordeaux cliques; the curiosity of the women

was all the more lively because the widow gave signs of the temperament which makes a Spanish woman and a creole particularly noted. She had black eyes and hair, the feet and form of a Spanish woman, — that swaying form the movements of which have a name in Spain. Her face, still beautiful, was particularly seductive for its creole complexion, the vividness of which can be described only by comparing it to muslin overlying crimson, so equally is the whiteness suffused with color. Her figure, which was full and rounded, attracted the eye by a grace which united nonchalance with vivacity, strength with ease. She attracted and she imposed, she seduced, but promised nothing. She was tall, which gave her at times the air and carriage of a queen. Men were taken by her conversation like birds in a snare; for she had by nature that genius which necessity bestows on schemers; she advanced from concession to concession, strengthening herself with what she gained to ask for more, knowing well how to retreat with rapid steps when concessions were demanded in return. Though ignorant of facts, she had known the courts of Spain and Naples, the celebrated men of the two Americas, many illustrious families of England and the continent, all of which gave her so extensive an education superficially that it seemed immense. She received her society with the grace and dignity which are never learned, but which come to certain naturally fine spirits like a second nature; assimilating choice things wherever they are met. If her reputation for virtue was unexplained, it gave at any rate much authority to her actions, her conversation, and her character.

Mother and daughter had a true friendship for each other, beyond the filial and maternal sentiment. They suited one another, and their perpetual contact had never produced the slightest jar. Consequently many persons explained Madame Évangélista's actions by maternal love. But although Natalie consoled her mother's persistent widowhood, she may not have been the only motive for it. Madame Évangélista had been, it was said, in love with a man who recovered his titles and property under the Restoration. This man, desirous of marrying her in 1814 had discreetly severed the connection in 1816. Madame Évangélista, to all appearance the best-hearted woman in the world, had, in the depths of her nature, a fearful quality, explainable only by Catherine de Médici's device: *Odiate e aspettate* — "Hate and wait." Accustomed to rule, having always been obeyed, she was like other royalties, amiable, gentle, easy and pleasant in ordinary life, but terrible, implacable, if the pride of the woman, the Spaniard, and the Casa-Reale was touched. She never forgave. This woman believed in the power of her hatred; she made an evil fate of it and bade it hover above her enemy. This fatal power she employed against the man who had jilted her. Events which seemed to prove the influence of her *jettatura* — the casting of an evil eye — confirmed her superstitious faith in herself. Though a minister and peer of France, this man began to ruin himself, and soon came to total ruin. His property, his personal and public honor were doomed to perish. At this crisis Madame Évangélista in her brilliant equipage passed her faithless lover walking on foot in the Champs Élysées, and

crushed him with a look which flamed with triumph. This misadventure, which occupied her mind for two years, was the original cause of her not remarrying. Later, her pride had drawn comparisons between the suitors who presented themselves and the husband who had loved her so sincerely and so well.

She had thus reached, through mistaken calculations and disappointed hopes, that period of life when women have no other part to take in life than that of mother; a part which involves the sacrifice of themselves to their children, the placing of their interests outside of self upon another household, — the last refuge of human affections.

Madame Évangélista divined Paul's nature intuitively, and hid her own from his perception. Paul was the very man she desired for a son-in-law, for the responsible editor of her future power. He belonged, through his mother, to the family of Maulincour, and the old Baronne de Maulincour, the friend of the Vidame de Pamiers, was then living in the centre of the faubourg Saint-Germain. The grandson of the baroness, Auguste de Maulincour, held a fine position in the army. Paul would therefore be an excellent introducer for the Évangélistas into Parisian society. The widow had known something of the Paris of the Empire, she now desired to shine in the Paris of the Restoration. There alone were the elements of political fortune, the only business in which women of the world could decently co-operate. Madame Évangélista, compelled by her husband's affairs to reside in Bordeaux, disliked the place. She desired a wider field, as gamblers rush to higher stakes. For her own personal ends, therefore,

she looked to Paul as a means of destiny, she proposed to employ the resources of her own talent and knowledge of life to advance her son-in-law, in order to enjoy through him the delights of power. Many men are thus made the screens of secret feminine ambitions. Madame Évangélista had, however, more than one interest, as we shall see, in laying hold of her daughter's husband.

Paul was naturally captivated by this woman, who charmed him all the more because she seemed to seek no influence over him. In reality she was using her ascendency to magnify herself, her daughter, and all her surroundings in his eyes, for the purpose of ruling from the start the man in whom she saw a means of gratifying her social longings. Paul, on the other hand, began to value himself more highly when he felt himself appreciated by the mother and daughter. He thought himself much cleverer than he really was when he found his reflections and sayings accepted and understood by Mademoiselle Natalie — who raised her head and smiled in response to them — and by the mother, whose flattery seemed always involuntary. The two women were so kind and friendly to him, he was so sure of pleasing them, they ruled him so delightfully by holding the thread of his self-love, that he soon passed all his time at the hôtel Évangélista.

A year after his return to Bordeaux, Comte Paul, without having declared himself, was so attentive to Natalie that the world considered him as courting her. Neither mother nor daughter appeared to be thinking of marriage. Mademoiselle Évangélista preserved towards Paul the reserve of a great lady who can make herself charming and converse agreeably without

permitting a single step into intimacy. This reserve, so little customary among provincials, pleased Paul immensely. Timid men are shy; sudden proposals alarm them. They retreat from happiness when it comes with a rush, and accept misfortune if it presents itself mildly with gentle shadows. Paul therefore committed himself in his own mind all the more because he saw no effort on Madame Évangélista's part to bind him. She fairly seduced him one evening by remarking that to superior women as well as men there came a period of life when ambition superseded all the earlier emotions of life.

"That woman is fitted," thought Paul, as he left her, "to advance me in diplomacy before I am even made a deputy."

If, in all the circumstances of life a man does not turn over and over both things and ideas in order to examine them thoroughly under their different aspects before taking action, that man is weak and incomplete and in danger of fatal failure. At this moment Paul was an optimist; he saw everything to advantage, and did not tell himself that an ambitious mother-in-law might prove a tyrant. So, every evening as he left the house, he fancied himself a married man, allured his mind with its own thought, and slipped on the slippers of wedlock cheerfully. In the first place, he had enjoyed his freedom too long to regret the loss of it; he was tired of a bachelor's life, which offered him nothing new; he now saw only its annoyances; whereas if he thought at times of the difficulties of marriage, its pleasures, in which lay novelty, came far more prominently before his mind.

"Marriage," he said to himself, "is disagreeable for people without means, but half its troubles disappear before wealth."

Every day some favorable consideration swelled the advantages which he now saw in this particular alliance.

"No matter to what position I attain, Natalie will always be on the level of her part," thought he, "and that is no small merit in a woman. How many of the Empire men I 've seen who suffered horribly through their wives! It is a great condition of happiness not to feel one's pride or one's vanity wounded by the companion we have chosen. A man can never be really unhappy with a well-bred wife; she will never make him ridiculous; such a woman is certain to be useful to him. Natalie will receive in her own house admirably."

So thinking, he taxed his memory as to the most distinguished women of the faubourg Saint-Germain, in order to convince himself that Natalie could, if not eclipse them, at any rate stand among them on a footing of perfect equality. All comparisons were to her advantage, for they rested on his own imagination, which followed his desires. Paris would have shown him daily other natures, young girls of other styles of beauty and charm, and the multiplicity of impressions would have balanced his mind; whereas in Bordeaux Natalie had no rivals, she was the solitary flower; moreover, she appeared to him at a moment when Paul was under the tyranny of an idea to which most men succumb at his age.

Thus these reasons of propinquity, joined to reasons

of self-love and a real passion which had no means of satisfaction except by marriage, led Paul on to an irrational love, which he had, however, the good sense to keep to himself. He even endeavored to study Mademoiselle Évangélista as a man should who desires not to compromise his future life; for the words of his friend de Marsay did sometimes rumble in his ears like a warning. But, in the first place, persons accustomed to luxury have a certain indifference to it which misleads them. They despise it, they use it; it is an instrument, and not the object of their existence. Paul never imagined, as he observed the habits of life of the two ladies, that they covered a gulf of ruin. Then, though there may exist some general rules to soften the asperities of marriage, there are none by which they can be accurately foreseen and evaded. When trouble arises between two persons who have undertaken to render life agreeable and easy to each other, it comes from the contact of continual intimacy, which, of course, does not exist between young people before they marry, and will never exist so long as our present social laws and customs prevail in France. All is more or less deception between the two young persons about to take each other for life, — an innocent and involuntary deception, it is true. Each endeavors to appear in a favorable light; both take a tone and attitude conveying a more favorable idea of their nature than they are able to maintain in after years. Real life, like the weather, is made up of gray and cloudy days alternating with those when the sun shines and the fields are gay. Young people, however, exhibit fine weather and no clouds. Later they attribute

to marriage the evils inherent in life itself; for there is in man a disposition to lay the blame of his own misery on the persons and things that surround him.

To discover in the demeanor, or the countenance, or the words, or the gestures of Mademoiselle Évangélista any indication that revealed the imperfections of her character, Paul must have possessed not only the knowledge of Lavater and Gall, but also a science in which there exists no formula of doctrine, — the individual and personal science of an observer, which, for its perfection, requires an almost universal knowledge. Natalie's face, like that of most young girls, was impenetrable. The deep, serene peace given by sculptors to the virgin faces of Justice and Innocence, divinities aloof from all earthly agitations, is the greatest charm of a young girl, the sign of her purity. Nothing, as yet, has stirred her; no shattered passion, no hope betrayed has clouded the placid expression of that pure face. Is that expression assumed? If so, there is no young girl behind it.

Natalie, closely held to the heart of her mother, had received, like other Spanish women, an education that was solely religious, together with a few instructions from her mother as to the part in life she was called upon to play. Consequently, the calm, untroubled expression of her face was natural. And yet it formed a casing in which the woman was wrapped as the moth in its cocoon. Nevertheless, any man clever at handling the scalpel of analysis might have detected in Natalie certain indications of the difficulties her character would present when brought into contact with conjugal or social life. Her beauty, which was really

marvellous, came from extreme regularity of feature harmonizing with the proportions of the head and the body. This species of perfection augurs ill for the mind; and there are few exceptions to the rule. All superior nature is found to have certain slight imperfections of form which become irresistible attractions, luminous points from which shine vivid sentiments, and on which the eye rests gladly. Perfect harmony expresses usually the coldness of a mixed organization.

Natalie's waist was round, — a sign of strength, but also the infallible indication of a will which becomes obstinacy in persons whose mind is neither keen nor broad. Her hands, like those of a Greek statue, confirmed the predictions of face and figure by revealing an inclination for illogical domination, of willing for will's sake only. Her eyebrows met, — a sign, according to some observers, which indicates jealousy. The jealousy of superior minds becomes emulation and leads to great things; that of small minds turns to hatred. The "hate and wait" of her mother was in her nature, without disguise. Her eyes were black apparently, though really brown with orange streaks, contrasting with her hair, of the ruddy tint so prized by the Romans, called auburn in England, a color which often appears in the offspring of persons of jet black hair, like that of Monsieur and Madame Évangélista. The whiteness and delicacy of Natalie's complexion gave to the contrast of color in her eyes and hair an inexpressible charm; and yet it was a charm that was purely external; for whenever the lines of a face are lacking in a certain soft roundness, whatever may be the finish and grace of the details, the

beauty therein expressed is not of the soul. These roses of deceptive youth will drop their leaves, and you will be surprised in a few years to see hardness and dryness where you once admired what seemed to be the beauty of noble qualities.

Though the outlines of Natalie's face had something august about them, her chin was slightly *empâté*, — a painter's expression which will serve to show the existence of sentiments the violence of which would only become manifest in after life. Her mouth, a trifle drawn in, expressed a haughty pride in keeping with her hand, her chin, her brows, and her beautiful figure. And — as a last diagnostic to guide the judgment of a connoisseur — Natalie's pure voice, a most seductive voice, had certain metallic tones. Softly as that brassy ring was managed, and in spite of the grace with which its sounds ran through the compass of the voice, that organ revealed the character of the Duke of Alba, from whom the Casa-Reales were collaterally descended. These indications were those of violent passions without tenderness, sudden devotions, irreconcilable dislikes, a mind without intelligence, and the desire to rule natural to persons who feel themselves inferior to their pretensions.

These defects, born of temperament and constitution, were buried in Natalie like ore in a mine, and would only appear under the shocks and harsh treatment to which all characters are subjected in this world. Meantime the grace and freshness of her youth, the distinction of her manners, her sacred ignorance, and the sweetness of a young girl, gave a delicate glamour to her features which could not fail to

mislead an unthinking or superficial mind. Her mother had early taught her the trick of agreeable talk which appears to imply superiority, replying to arguments by clever jests, and attracting by the graceful volubility beneath which a woman hides the subsoil of her mind, as Nature disguises her barren strata beneath a wealth of ephemeral vegetation. Natalie had the charm of children who have never known what it is to suffer. She charmed by her frankness, and had none of that solemn air which mothers impose on their daughters by laying down a programme of behavior and language until the time comes when they marry and are emancipated. She was gay and natural, like any young girl who knows nothing of marriage, expects only pleasure from it, replies to all objections with a jest, foresees no troubles, and thinks she is acquiring the right to have her own way.

How could Paul, who loved as men love when desire increases love, perceive in a girl of this nature whose beauty dazzled him, the woman, such as she would probably be at thirty, when observers themselves have been misled by these appearances? Besides, if happiness might prove difficult to find in a marriage with such a girl, it was not impossible. Through these embryo defects shone several fine qualities. There is no good quality which, if properly developed by the hand of an able master, will not stifle defects, especially in a young girl who loves him. But to render ductile so intractable a woman, the iron wrist, about which de Marsay had preached to Paul, was needful. The Parisian dandy was right. Fear, inspired by love is an infallible instrument by which to manage the

minds of women. Whoso loves, fears; whoso fears is nearer to affection than to hatred.

Had Paul the coolness, firmness, and judgment required for this struggle, which an able husband ought not to let the wife suspect? Did Natalie love Paul? Like most young girls, Natalie mistook for love the first emotions of instinct and the pleasure she felt in Paul's external appearance; but she knew nothing of the things of marriage nor the demands of a home. To her, the Comte de Manerville, a rising diplomatist, to whom the courts of Europe were known, and one of the most elegant young men in Paris, could not seem, what perhaps he was, an ordinary man, without moral force, timid, though brave in some ways, energetic perhaps in adversity, but helpless against the vexations and annoyances that hinder happiness. Would she, in after years, have sufficient tact and insight to distinguish Paul's noble qualities in the midst of his minor defects? Would she not magnify the latter and forget the former, after the manner of young wives who know nothing of life? There comes a time when wives will pardon defects in the husband who spares her annoyances, considering annoyances in the same category as misfortunes. What conciliating power, what wise experience would uphold and enlighten the home of this young pair? Paul and his wife would doubtless think they loved when they had really not advanced beyond the endearments and compliments of the honeymoon. Would Paul in that early period yield to the tyranny of his wife, instead of establishing his empire? Could Paul say, No? All was peril to a man so weak where even a strong man ran some risks.

The subject of this Study is not the transition of a bachelor into a married man, — a picture which, if broadly composed, would not lack the attraction which the inner struggles of our nature and feelings give to the commonest situations in life. The events and the ideas which led to the marriage of Paul with Natalie Évangélista are an introduction to our real subject, which is to sketch the great comedy that precedes, in France, all conjugal pairing. This Scene, until now singularly neglected by our dramatic authors although it offers novel resources to their wit, controlled Paul's future life and was now awaited by Madame Évangélista with feelings of terror. We mean the discussion which takes place on the subject of the marriage contract in all families, whether noble or bourgeois, for human passions are as keenly excited by small interests as by large ones. These comedies, played before a notary, all resemble, more or less, the one we shall now relate, the interest of which will be far less in the pages of this book than in the memories of married persons.

III.

THE MARRIAGE CONTRACT — FIRST DAY.

At the beginning of the winter of 1822, Paul de Manerville made a formal request, through his great-aunt, the Baronne de Maulincour, for the hand of Mademoiselle Natalie Évangélista. Though the baroness never stayed more than two months in Médoc, she remained on this occasion till the last of October, in order to assist her nephew through the affair and play the part of a mother to him. After conveying the first suggestions to Madame Évangélista the experienced old woman returned to inform Paul of the results of the overture.

"My child," she said, "the affair is won. In talking of property, I found that Madame Évangélista gives nothing of her own to her daughter. Mademoiselle Natalie's dowry is her patrimony. Marry her, my dear boy. Men who have a name and an estate to transmit, a family to continue, must, sooner or later, end in marriage. I wish I could see my dear Auguste taking that course. You can now carry on the marriage without me; I have nothing to give you but my blessing, and women as old as I are out of place at a wedding. I leave for Paris to-morrow. When you present your wife in society I shall be able to see her and assist her far more to the purpose than now. If

you had had no house in Paris I would gladly have arranged the second floor of mine for you."

"Dear aunt," said Paul, "I thank you heartily. But what do you mean when you say that the mother gives nothing of her own, and that the daughter's dowry is her patrimony?"

"The mother, my dear boy, is a sly cat, who takes advantage of her daughter's beauty to impose conditions and allow you only that which she cannot prevent you from having; namely, the daughter's fortune from her father. We old people know the importance of inquiring closely, What has he? What has she? I advise you therefore to give particular instructions to your notary. The marriage contract, my dear child, is the most sacred of all duties. If your father and your mother had not made their bed properly you might now be sleeping without sheets. You will have children, they are the commonest results of marriage, and you must think of them. Consult Maître Mathias our old notary."

Madame de Maulincour departed, having plunged Paul into a state of extreme perplexity. His mother-in-law a sly cat! Must he struggle for his interests in the marriage contract? Was it necessary to defend them? Who was likely to attack them?

He followed the advice of his aunt and confided the drawing-up of the marriage contract to Maître Mathias. But these threatened discussions oppressed him, and he went to see Madame Évangélista and announce his intentions in a state of rather lively agitation. Like all timid men, he shrank from allowing the distrust his aunt had put into his mind to be seen; in fact, he con-

sidered it insulting. To avoid even a slight jar with a person so imposing to his mind as his future mother-in-law, he proceeded to state his intentions with the circumlocution natural to persons who dare not face a difficulty.

"Madame," he said, choosing a moment when Natalie was absent from the room, "you know, of course, what a family notary is. Mine is a worthy old man, to whom it would be a sincere grief if he were not intrusted with the drawing of my marriage contract."

"Why, of course!" said Madame Évangélista, interrupting him, "but are not marriage contracts always made by agreement of the notaries of both families?"

The time that Paul took to reply to this question was occupied by Madame Évangélista in asking herself, "What is he thinking of?" for women possess in an eminent degree the art of reading thoughts from the play of countenance. She divined the instigations of the great-aunt in the embarrassed glance and the agitated tone of voice which betrayed an inward struggle in Paul's mind.

"At last," she thought to herself, "the fatal day has come; the crisis begins — how will it end? My notary is Monsieur Solonet," she said, after a pause. "Yours, I think you said, is Monsieur Mathias; I will invite them to dinner to-morrow, and they can come to an understanding then. It is their business to conciliate our interests without our interference; just as good cooks are expected to furnish good food without instructions."

"Yes, you are right," said Paul, letting a faint sigh of relief escape him.

By a singular transposition of parts, Paul, innocent of all wrong-doing, trembled, while Madame Évangélista, though a prey to the utmost anxiety, was outwardly calm.

The widow owed her daughter one-third of the fortune left by Monsieur Évangélista, — namely, nearly twelve hundred thousand francs, — and she knew herself unable to pay it, even by taking the whole of her property to do so. She would therefore be placed at the mercy of a son-in-law. Though she might be able to control Paul if left to himself, would he, when enlightened by his notary, agree to release her from rendering her account as guardian of her daughter's patrimony? If Paul withdrew his proposals all Bordeaux would know the reason and Natalie's future marriage would be made impossible. This mother, who desired the happiness of her daughter, this woman, who from infancy had lived honorably, was aware that on the morrow she must become dishonest. Like those great warriors who fain would blot from their lives the moment when they had felt a secret cowardice, she ardently desired to cut this inevitable day from the record of hers. Most assuredly some hairs on her head must have whitened during the night, when, face to face with facts, she bitterly regretted her extravagance as she felt the hard necessities of the situation.

Among these necessities was that of confiding the truth to her notary, for whom she sent in the morning as soon as she rose. She was forced to reveal to him a secret defaulting she had never been willing to admit to herself, for she had steadily advanced to the abyss, relying on some chance accident, which never hap-

pened, to relieve her. There rose in her soul a feeling against Paul, that was neither dislike, nor aversion, nor anything, as yet, unkind; but *he* was the cause of this crisis; the opposing party in this secret suit; he became, without knowing it, an innocent enemy she was forced to conquer. What human being did ever yet love his or her dupe? Compelled to deceive and trick him if she could, the Spanish woman resolved, like other women, to put her whole force of character into the struggle, the dishonor of which could be absolved by victory only.

In the stillness of the night she excused her conduct to her own mind by a tissue of arguments in which her pride predominated. Natalie had shared the benefit of her extravagance. There was not a single base or ignoble motive in what she had done. She was no accountant, but was that a crime, a delinquency? A man was only too lucky to obtain a wife like Natalie without a penny. Such a treasure bestowed upon him might surely release her from a guardianship account. How many men had bought the women they loved by greater sacrifices? Why should a man do less for a wife than for a mistress? Besides, Paul was a nullity, a man of no force, incapable; she would spend the best resources of her mind upon him and open to him a fine career; he should owe his future power and position to her influence; in that way she could pay her debt. He would indeed be a fool to refuse such a future; and for what? a few paltry thousands, more or less. He would be infamous if he withdrew for such a reason.

"But," she added, to herself, "if the negotiation does not succeed at once, I shall leave Bordeaux. I

can still find a good marriage for Natalie by investing the proceeds of what is left, house and diamonds and furniture, — keeping only a small income for myself."

When a strong soul constructs a way of ultimate escape, — as Richelieu did at Brouage, — and holds in reserve a vigorous end, the resolution becomes a lever which strengthens its immediate way. The thought of this finale in case of failure comforted Madame Évangélista, who fell asleep with all the more confidence as she remembered her assistant in the coming duel.

This was a young man named Solonet, considered the ablest notary in Bordeaux; now twenty-seven years of age and decorated with the Legion of honor for having actively contributed to the second return of the Bourbons. Proud and happy to be received in the home of Madame Évangélista, less as a notary than as belonging to the royalist society of Bordeaux, Solonet had conceived for that fine setting sun one of those passions which women like Madame Évangélista repulse, although flattered and graciously allowing them to exist upon the surface. Solonet remained therefore in a self-satisfied condition of hope and becoming respect. Being sent for, he arrived the next morning with the promptitude of a slave and was received by the coquettish widow in her bedroom, where she allowed him to find her in a very becoming dishabille.

"Can I," she said, "count upon your discretion and your entire devotion in a discussion which will take place in my house this evening? You will readily understand that it relates to the marriage of my daughter."

The young man expended himself in gallant protestations.

"Now to the point," she said.

"I am listening," he replied, checking his ardor.

Madame Évangélista then stated her position baldly.

"My dear lady, that is nothing to be troubled about," said Maître Solonet, assuming a confident air as soon as his client had given him the exact figures. "The question is how have you conducted yourself toward Monsieur de Manerville? In this matter questions of manner and deportment are of greater importance than those of law and finance."

Madame Évangélista wrapped herself in dignity. The notary learned to his satisfaction that until the present moment his client's relations to Paul had been distant and reserved, and that partly from native pride and partly from involuntary shrewdness she had treated the Comte de Manerville as in some sense her inferior and as though it were an honor for him to be allowed to marry Mademoiselle Évangélista. She assured Solonet that neither she nor her daughter could be suspected of any mercenary interests in the marriage; that they had the right, should Paul make any financial difficulties, to retreat from the affair to an illimitable distance; and finally, that she had already acquired over her future son-in law a very remarkable ascendency.

"If that is so," said Solonet, "tell me what are the utmost concessions you are willing to make."

"I wish to make as few as possible," she answered, laughing.

"A woman's answer," cried Solonet. "Madame, are you anxious to marry Mademoiselle Natalie?"

"Yes."

"And you want a receipt for the eleven hundred and fifty-six thousand francs, for which you are responsible on the guardianship account which the law obliges you to render to your son-in-law?"

"Yes."

"How much do you want to keep back?"

"Thirty thousand a year, at least."

"It is a question of conquer or die, is it?"

"It is."

"Well, then, I must reflect on the necessary means to that end; it will need all our cleverness to manage our forces. I will give you some instructions on my arrival this evening; follow them carefully, and I think I may promise you a successful issue. Is the Comte de Manerville in love with Mademoiselle Natalie?" he asked as he rose to take leave.

"He adores her."

"That is not enough. Does he desire her to the point of disregarding all pecuniary difficulties?"

"Yes."

"That's what I call having a lien upon a daughter's property," cried the notary. "Make her look her best to-night," he added with a sly glance.

"She has a most charming dress for the occasion."

"The marriage-contract dress is, in my opinion, half the battle," said Solonet.

This last argument seemed so cogent to Madame Évangélista that she superintended Natalie's toilet herself, as much perhaps to watch her daughter as to make her the innocent accomplice of her financial conspiracy.

With her hair dressed à la Sévigné and wearing a gown of white tulle adorned with pink ribbons, Natalie seemed to her mother so beautiful as to guarantee victory. When the lady's-maid left the room and Madame Évangélista was certain that no one could overhear her, she arranged a few curls on her daughter's head by way of exordium.

"Dear child," she said, in a voice that was firm apparently, "do you sincerely love the Comte de Manerville?"

Mother and daughter cast strange looks at each other.

"Why do you ask that question, little mother? and to-day more than yesterday? Why have you thrown me with him?"

"If you and I had to part forever would you still persist in the marriage?"

"I should give it up — and I should not die of grief."

"You do not love him, my dear," said the mother, kissing her daughter's forehead.

"But why, my dear mother, are you playing the Grand Inquisitor?"

"I wished to know if you desired the marriage without being madly in love with the husband."

"I love him."

"And you are right. He is a count; we will make him a peer of France between us; nevertheless, there are certain difficulties."

"Difficulties between persons who love each other? Oh, no. The heart of the Pink of Fashion is too firmly planted here," she said, with a pretty gesture,

"to make the very slightest objection. I am sure of that."

"But suppose it were otherwise?" persisted Madame Évangélista.

"He would be profoundly and forever forgotten," replied Natalie.

"Good! You are a Casa-Reale. But suppose, though he madly loves you, suppose certain discussions and difficulties should arise, not of his own making, but which he must decide in your interests as well as in mine — hey, Natalie, what then? Without lowering your dignity, perhaps a little softness in your manner might decide him — a word, a tone, a mere nothing. Men are so made; they resist a serious argument, but they yield to a tender look."

"I understand! a little touch to make my Favori leap the barrier," said Natalie, making the gesture of striking a horse with her whip.

"My darling! I ask nothing that resembles seduction. You and I have sentiments of the old Castilian honor which will never permit us to pass certain limits. Count Paul shall know our situation."

"What situation?"

"You would not understand it. But I tell you now that if after seeing you in all your glory his look betrays the slightest hesitation, — and I shall watch him, — on that instant I will break off the marriage; I will liquidate my property, leave Bordeaux, and go to Douai, to be near the Claës. Madame Claës is our relation through the Temnincks. Then I'll marry you to a peer of France, and take refuge in a convent myself, that I may give up to you my whole fortune."

"Mother, what am I to do to prevent such misfortunes?" cried Natalie.

"I have never seen you so beautiful as you are now," replied her mother. "Be a little coquettish, and all is well."

Madame Évangélista left Natalie to her thoughts, and went to arrange her own toilet in a way that would bear comparison with that of her daughter. If Natalie ought to make herself attractive to Paul she ought, none the less, to inflame the ardor of her champion Solonet. The mother and daughter were therefore under arms when Paul arrived, bearing the bouquet which for the last few months he had daily offered to his love. All three conversed pleasantly while awaiting the arrival of the notaries.

This day brought to Paul the first skirmish of that long and wearisome warfare called marriage. It is therefore necessary to state the forces on both sides, the position of the belligerent bodies, and the ground on which they are about to manœuvre.

To maintain a struggle, the importance of which had wholly escaped him, Paul's only auxiliary was the old notary, Mathias. Both were about to be confronted, unaware and defenceless, by a most unexpected circumstance; to be pressed by an enemy whose strategy was planned, and driven to decide on a course without having time to reflect upon it. Where is the man who would not have succumbed, even though assisted by Cujas and Barthole? How should he look for deceit and treachery where all seemed compliant and natural? What could old Mathias do alone against Madame Évangélista, against Solonet, against Natalie, espe-

cially when a client in love goes over to the enemy as soon as the rising conflict threatens his happiness? Already Paul was damaging his cause by making the customary lover's speeches, to which his passion gave excessive value in the ears of Madame Évangélista, whose object it was to drive him to commit himself.

The matrimonial *condottieri* now about to fight for their clients, whose personal powers were to be so vitally important in this solemn encounter, the two notaries, in short, represent individually the old and the new systems, — old-fashioned notarial usage, and the new-fangled modern procedure.

Maître Mathias was a worthy old gentleman sixty-nine years of age, who took great pride in his forty years' exercise of the profession. His huge gouty feet were encased in shoes with silver buckles, making a ridiculous termination to legs so spindling, with knees so bony, that when he crossed them they made you think of the emblems on a tombstone. His puny little thighs, lost in a pair of wide black breeches fastened with buckles, seemed to bend beneath the weight of a round stomach and a torso developed, like that of most sedentary persons, into a stout barrel, always buttoned into a green coat with square tails, which no man could remember to have ever seen new. His hair, well brushed and powdered, was tied in a rat's tail that lay between the collar of his coat and that of his waistcoat, which was white, with a pattern of flowers. With his round head, his face the color of a vine-leaf, his blue eyes, a trumpet nose, a thick-lipped mouth, and a double chin, the dear old fellow excited, whenever he appeared among strangers who did not

know him, that satirical laugh which Frenchmen so generously bestow on the ludicrous creations Dame Nature occasionally allows herself, which Art delights in exaggerating under the name of caricatures.

But in Maître Mathias, mind had triumphed over form; the qualities of his soul had vanquished the oddities of his body. The inhabitants of Bordeaux, as a rule, testified a friendly respect and a deference that was full of esteem for him. The old man's voice went to their hearts and sounded there with the eloquence of uprightness. His craft consisted in going straight to the fact, overturning all subterfuge and evil devices by plain questionings. His quick perception, his long training in his profession gave him that divining sense which goes to the depths of conscience and reads its secret thoughts. Though grave and deliberate in business, the patriarch could be gay with the gayety of our ancestors. He could risk a song after dinner, enjoy all family festivities, celebrate the birthdays of grandmothers and children, and bury with due solemnity the Christmas log. He loved to send presents at New Year, and eggs at Easter; he believed in the duties of a godfather, and never deserted the customs which colored the life of the olden time. Maître Mathias was a noble and venerable relic of the notaries, obscure great men, who gave no receipt for the millions intrusted to them, but returned those millions in the sacks they were delivered in, tied with the same twine; men who fulfilled their trusts to the letter, drew honest inventories, took fatherly interest in their clients, often barring the way to extravagance and dissipation, — men to whom families confided their secrets, and who

felt so responsible for any error in their deeds that they meditated long and carefully over them. Never during his whole notarial life, had any client found reason to complain of a bad investment or an ill-placed mortgage. His own fortune, slowly but honorably acquired, had come to him as the result of a thirty years' practice and careful economy. He had established in life fourteen of his clerks. Religious, and generous in secret, Mathias was found wherever good was to be done without remuneration. An active member on hospital and other benevolent committees, he subscribed the largest sums to relieve all sudden misfortunes and emergencies, as well as to create certain useful permanent institutions; consequently, neither he nor his wife kept a carriage. Also his word was felt to be sacred, and his coffers held as much of the money of others as a bank; and also, we may add, he went by the name of "Our good Monsieur Mathias," and when he died, three thousand persons followed him to his grave.

Solonet was the style of young notary who comes in humming a tune, affects light-heartedness, declares that business is better done with a laugh than seriously. He is the notary captain of the national guard, who dislikes to be taken for a notary, solicits the cross of the Legion of honor, keeps his cabriolet, and leaves the verification of his deeds to his clerks; he is the notary who goes to balls and theatres, buys pictures and plays at écarté; he has coffers in which gold is received on deposit and is later returned in bank-bills, — a notary who follows his epoch, risks capital in doubtful investments, speculates with all he can lay his

hands on, and expects to retire with an income of thirty thousand francs after ten years' practice; in short, the notary whose cleverness comes of his duplicity, whom many men fear as an accomplice possessing their secrets, and who sees in his practice a means of ultimately marrying some blue-stockinged heiress.

When the slender, fair-haired Solonet, curled, perfumed, and booted like the leading gentleman at the Vaudeville, and dressed like a dandy whose most important business is a duel, entered Madame Évangélista's salon, preceding his brother notary, whose advance was delayed by a twinge of the gout, the two men presented to the life one of those famous caricatures entitled "Former Times and the Present Day," which had such eminent success under the Empire. If Madame and Mademoiselle Évangélista to whom the "good Monsieur Mathias," was personally unknown, felt, on first seeing him, a slight inclination to laugh, they were soon touched by the old-fashioned grace with which he greeted them. The words he used were full of that amenity which amiable old men convey as much by the ideas they suggest as by the manner in which they express them. The younger notary, with his flippant tone, seemed on a lower plane. Mathias showed his superior knowledge of life by the reserved manner with which he accosted Paul. Without compromising his white hairs, he showed that he respected the young man's nobility, while at the same time he claimed the honor due to old age, and made it felt that social rights are mutual. Solonet's bow and greeting, on the contrary, expressed a sense of perfect equality, which would naturally affront the pretensions of a man

of society and make the notary ridiculous in the eyes of a real noble. Solonet made a motion, somewhat too familiar, to Madame Évangélista, inviting her to a private conference in the recess of a window. For some minutes they talked to each other in a low voice, giving way now and then to laughter, — no doubt to lessen in the minds of others the importance of the conversation, in which Solonet was really communicating to his sovereign lady the plan of battle.

"But," he said, as he ended, "will you have the courage to sell your house?"

"Undoubtedly," she replied.

Madame Évangélista did not choose to tell her notary the motive of this heroism, which struck him greatly. Solonet's zeal might have cooled had he known that his client was really intending to leave Bordeaux. She had not as yet said anything about that intention to Paul, in order not to alarm him with the preliminary steps and circumlocutions which must be taken before he entered on the political life she planned for him.

After dinner the two plenipotentaries left the loving pair with the mother, and betook themselves to an adjoining salon where their conference was arranged to take place. A dual scene then followed on this domestic stage: in the chimney-corner of the great salon a scene of love, in which to all appearance life was smiles and joy; in the other room, a scene of gravity and gloom, where selfish interests, baldly proclaimed, openly took the part they play in life under flowery disguises.

"My dear master," said Solonet, "the document can remain under your lock and key; I know very well what

I owe to my old preceptor." Mathias bowed gravely. "But," continued Solonet, unfolding the rough copy of a deed he had made his clerk draw up, "as we are the oppressed party, I mean the daughter, I have written the contract — which will save you trouble. We marry with our rights under the rule of community of interests; with general donation of our property to each other in case of death without heirs; if not, donation of one-fourth as life interest, and one-fourth in fee; the sum placed in community of interests to be one-fourth of the respective property of each party; the survivor to possess the furniture without appraisal. It 's all as simple as how d' ye do."

"Ta, ta, ta, ta," said Mathias, "I don't do business as one sings a tune. What are your claims?"

"What are yours?" said Solonet.

"Our property" replied Mathias, "is: the estate of Lanstrac, which brings in a rental of twenty-three thousand francs a year, not counting the natural products. *Item:* the farms of Grassol and Gaudet, each worth three thousand six hundred francs a year. *Item:* the vineyard of Belle-Rose, yielding in ordinary years sixteen thousand francs; total, forty-six thousand two hundred francs a year. *Item:* the patrimonial mansion at Bordeaux taxed for nine hundred francs. *Item:* a handsome house, between court and garden in Paris, rue de la Pépinière, taxed for fifteen hundred francs. These pieces of property, the title-deeds of which I hold, are derived from our father and mother, except the house in Paris, which we bought ourselves. We must also reckon in the furniture of the two houses, and that of the château of Lanstrac,

estimated at four hundred and fifty thousand francs. There's the table, the cloth, and the first course. What do you bring for the second course and the dessert?"

"Our rights," replied Solonet.

"Specify them, my friend," said Mathias. "What do you bring us? Where is the inventory of the property left by Monsieur Évangélista? Show me the liquidation, the investment of the amount. Where is your capital? — if there is any capital. Where is your landed property? — if you have any. In short, let us see your guardianship account, and tell us what you bring and what your mother will secure to us."

"Does Monsieur le Comte de Manerville love Mademoiselle Évangélista?"

"He wishes to make her his wife if the marriage can be suitably arranged," said the old notary. "I am not a child; this matter concerns our business, and not our feelings."

"The marriage will be off unless you show generous feeling; and for this reason," continued Solonet. "No inventory was made at the death of our husband; we are Spaniards, creoles, and know nothing of French laws. Besides, we were too deeply grieved at our loss to think at such a time of the miserable formalities which occupy cold hearts. It is publicly well known that our late husband adored us, and that we mourned for him sincerely. If we did have a settlement of accounts with a short inventory attached, made, as one may say, by common report, you can thank our surrogate guardian, who obliged us to establish a status and assign to our daughter a fortune, such as it is, at a

time when we were forced to withdraw from London our English securities, the capital of which was immense, and re-invest the proceeds in Paris, where interests were doubled."

"Don't talk nonsense to me. There are various ways of verifying the property. What was the amount of your legacy tax? Those figures will enable us to get at the total. Come to the point. Tell us frankly what you received from the father's estate and how much remains of it. If we are very much in love we'll see then what we can do."

"If you are marrying us for our money you can go about your business. We have claims to more than a million; but all that remains to our mother is this house and furniture and four hundred odd thousand francs invested about 1817 in the Five-per-cents, which yield about forty thousand francs a year."

"Then why do you live in a style that requires one hundred thousand a year at the least?" cried Mathias, horror-stricken.

"Our daughter has cost us the eyes out of our head," replied Solonet, "Besides, we like to spend money. Your jeremiads, let me tell you, won't recover two farthings of the money."

"With the fifty thousand francs a year which belonged to Mademoiselle Natalie you could have brought her up handsomely without coming to ruin. But if you have squandered everything while you were a girl what will it be when you a married woman?"

"Then drop us altogether," said Solonet, "The handsomest girl in Bordeaux has a right to spend more than she has, if she likes."

"I'll talk to my client about that," said the old notary.

"Very good, old father Cassandra, go and tell your client that we have n't a penny," thought Solonet, who, in the solitude of his study, had strategically massed his forces, drawn up his propositions, manned the drawbridge of discussion, and prepared the point at which the opposing party, thinking the affair a failure, could suddenly be led into a compromise which would end in the triumph of his client.

The white dress with its rose-colored ribbons, the Sévigné curls, Natalie's tiny foot, her winning glance, her pretty fingers constantly employed in adjusting curls that needed no adjustment, these girlish manœuvres like those of a peacock spreading his tail, had brought Paul to the point at which his future mother-in-law desired to see him. He was intoxicated with love, and his eyes, the sure thermometer of the soul, indicated the degree of passion at which a man commits a thousand follies.

"Natalie is so beautiful," he whispered to the mother, "that I can conceive the frenzy which leads a man to pay for his happiness by death."

Madame Évangélista replied with a shake of her head: —

"Lover's talk, my dear count. My husband never said such charming things to me; but he married me without a fortune and for thirteen years he never caused me one moment's pain."

"Is that a lesson you are giving me?" said Paul, laughing.

"You know how I love you, my dear son," she

answered, pressing his hand. "I must indeed love you well to give you my Natalie."

"Give me, give me?" said the young girl, waving a screen of Indian feathers, "what are you whispering about me?"

"I was telling her," replied Paul, "how much I love you, since etiquette forbids me to tell it to you."

"Why?"

"I fear to say too much."

"Ah! you know too well how to offer the jewels of flattery. Shall I tell you my private opinion about you? Well, I think you have more mind than a lover ought to have. To be the Pink of Fashion and a wit as well," she added, dropping her eyes, "is to have too many advantages: a man should choose between them. I fear too, myself."

"And why?"

"We must not talk in this way. Mamma, do you not think that this conversation is dangerous inasmuch as the contract is not yet signed?"

"It soon will be," said Paul.

"I should like to know what Achilles and Nestor are saying to each other in the next room," said Natalie, nodding toward the door of the little salon with a childlike expression of curiosity.

"They are talking of our children and our death and a lot of other such trifles; they are counting our gold to see if we can keep five horses in the stables. They are talking also of deeds of gift; but there, I have forestalled them."

"How so?"

"Have I not given myself wholly to you?" he said,

looking straight at the girl, whose beauty was enhanced by the blush which the pleasure of this answer brought to her face.

"Mamma, how can I acknowledge so much generosity."

"My dear child, you have a lifetime before you in which to return it. To make the daily happiness of a home, is to bring a treasure into it. I had no other fortune when I married."

"Do you like Lanstrac?" asked Paul, addressing Natalie.

"How could I fail to like the place where you were born?" she replied. "I wish I could see your house."

"*Our* house," said Paul. "Do you not want to know if I shall understand your tastes and arrange the house to suit you? Your mother had made a husband's task most difficult; you have always been so happy! But where love is infinite, nothing is impossible."

"My dear children," said Madame Évangélista, "do you feel willing to stay in Bordeaux after your marriage? If you have the courage to face the people here who know you and will watch and hamper you, so be it! But if you feel that desire for a solitude together which can hardly be expressed, let us go to Paris where the life of a young couple can pass unnoticed in the stream. There alone you can behave as lovers without fearing to seem ridiculous."

"You are quite right," said Paul, "but I shall hardly have time to get my house ready. However, I will write to-night to de Marsay, the friend on whom I can always count to get things done for me."

At the moment when Paul, like all young men accustomed to satisfy their desires without previous calculation, was inconsiderately binding himself to the expenses of a stay in Paris, Maître Mathias entered the salon and made a sign to his client that he wished to speak to him.

"What is it, my friend?" asked Paul, following the old man to the recess of a window.

"Monsieur le comte," said the honest lawyer, "there is not a penny of dowry. My advice is: put off the conference to another day, so that you may gain time to consider your proper course."

"Monsieur Paul," said Natalie, "I have a word to say in private to you."

Though Madame Évangélista's face was calm, no Jew of the middle ages ever suffered greater torture in his caldron of boiling oil than she was enduring in her violet velvet gown. Solonet had pledged the marriage to her, but she was ignorant of the means and conditions of success. The anguish of this uncertainty was intolerable. Possibly she owed her safety to her daughter's disobedience. Natalie had considered the advice of her mother and noticed her anxiety. When she saw the success of her own coquetry she was struck to the heart with a variety of contradictory thoughts. Without blaming her mother, she was half-ashamed of manœuvres the object of which was, undoubtedly, some personal game. She was also seized with a jealous curiosity which is easily conceived. She wanted to find out if Paul loved her well enough to rise above the obstacles that her mother foresaw and which she now saw clouding the face of the old lawyer. These

ideas and sentiments prompted her to an action of loyalty which became her well. But, for all that, the blackest perfidy could not have been as dangerous as her present innocence.

"Paul," she said in a low voice, and she so called him for the first time, "if any difficulties as to property arise to separate us, remember that I free you from all engagements, and will allow you to let the blame of such a rupture rest on me."

She put such dignity into this expression of her generosity that Paul believed in her disinterestedness and in her ignorance of the strange fact that his notary had just told to him. He pressed the young girl's hand and kissed it like a man to whom love is more precious than wealth. Natalie left the room.

"*Sac-à-papier!* Monsieur le comte, you are committing a great folly," said the old notary, rejoining his client.

Paul grew thoughtful. He had expected to unite Natalie's fortune with his own and thus obtain for his married life an income of one hundred thousand francs a year; and however much a man may be in love he cannot pass without emotion and anxiety from the prospect of a hundred thousand to the certainty of forty-six thousand francs a year and the duty of providing for a woman accustomed to every luxury.

"My daughter is no longer here," said Madame Évangélista, advancing almost regally toward her son-in-law and his notary. "May I be told what is happening?"

"Madame," replied Mathias, alarmed at Paul's silence, "an obstacle which I fear will delay us has arisen —"

At these words, Maître Solonet issued from the little salon and cut short the old man's speech by a remark which restored Paul's composure. Overcome by the remembrance of his gallant speeches and his lover-like behavior, he felt unable to disown them or to change his course. He longed, for the moment, to fling himself into a gulf; Solonet's words relieved him.

"There is a way," said the younger notary, with an easy air, "by which madame can meet the payment which is due to her daughter. Madame Évangélista possesses forty thousand francs a year from an investment in the Five-per-cents, the capital of which will soon be at par, if not above it. We may therefore reckon it at eight hundred thousand francs. This house and garden are fully worth two hundred thousand. On that estimate, Madame can convey by the marriage contract the titles of that property to her daughter, reserving only a life interest in it — for I conclude that Monsieur le comte could hardly wish to leave his mother-in-law without means? Though Madame has certainly run through her fortune, she is still able to make good that of her daughter, or very nearly so."

"Women are most unfortunate in having no knowledge of business," said Madame Évangélista. "Have I titles to property? and what are life-interests?"

Paul was in a sort of ecstasy as he listened to the proposed arrangement. The old notary, seeing the trap, and his client with one foot caught in it, was petrified for a moment, as he said to himself: —

"I am certain they are tricking us."

"If madame will follow my advice," said Solonet, "she will secure her own tranquillity. By sacrificing herself in this way she may be sure that no minors will ultimately harass her — for we never know who may live and who may die! Monsieur le comte will then give due acknowledgment in the marriage contract of having received the sum total of Mademoiselle Évangélista's patrimonial inheritance."

Mathias could not restrain the indignation which shone in his eyes and flushed his face.

"And that sum," he said, shaking, "is — "

"One million, one hundred and fifty-six thousand francs according to the document — "

"Why don't you ask Monsieur le comte to make over *hic et nunc* his whole fortune to his future wife?" said Mathias. "It would be more honest than what you now propose. I will not allow the ruin of the Comte de Manerville to take place under my very eyes — "

He made a step as if to address his client, who was silent throughout this scene as if dazed by it; but he turned and said, addressing Madame Évangélista: —

"Do not suppose, madame, that I think you a party to these ideas of my brother notary. I consider you an honest woman and a lady who knows nothing of business."

"Thank you, brother notary," said Solonet.

"You know that there can be no offence between you and me," replied Mathias. "Madame," he added, "you ought to know the result of this proposed arrangement. You are still young and beautiful enough to marry again — Ah! madame," said the old man,

noting her gesture, "who can answer for themselves on that point?"

"I did not suppose, monsieur," said Madame Évangélista, "that, after remaining a widow for the seven best years of my life, and refusing the most brilliant offers for my daughter's sake, I should be suspected of such a piece of folly as marrying again at thirty-nine years of age. If we were not talking business I should regard your suggestion as an impertinence."

"Would it not be more impertinent if I suggested that you could not marry again?"

"Can and will are separate terms," remarked Solonet, gallantly."

"Well," resumed Maître Mathias, "we will say nothing of your marriage. You may, and we all desire it, live for forty-five years to come. Now, if you keep for yourself the life-interest in your daughter's patrimony, your children are laid on the shelf for the best years of their lives."

"What does that mean?" said the widow. "I don't understand being laid on a shelf.

Solonet, the man of elegance and good taste, began to laugh.

"I 'll translate it for you," said Mathias. "If your children are wise they will think of the future. To think of the future means laying by half our income, provided we have only two children, to whom we are bound to give a fine education and a handsome dowry. Your daughter and son-in-law will, therefore, be reduced to live on twenty thousand francs a year, though each has spent fifty thousand while still unmarried. But that is nothing. The law obliges my

client to account, hereafter, to his children for the eleven hundred and fifty-six thousand francs of their mother's patrimony; yet he may not have received them if his wife should die and madame should survive her, which may very well happen. To sign such a contract is to fling one's self into the river, bound hand and foot. You wish to make your daughter happy, do you not? If she loves her husband, a fact which notaries never doubt, she will share his troubles. Madame, I see enough in this scheme to make her die of grief and anxiety; you are consigning her to poverty. Yes, madame, poverty; to persons accustomed to the use of one hundred thousand francs a year, twenty thousand is poverty. Moreover, if Monsieur le comte, out of love for his wife, were guilty of extravagance, she could ruin him by exercising her rights when misfortunes overtook him. I plead now for you, for them, for their children, for every one."

"The old fellow makes a lot of smoke with his cannon," thought Maître Solonet, giving his client a look, which meant, "Keep on!"

"There is one way of combining all interests," replied Madame Évangélista, calmly. "I can reserve to myself only the necessary cost of living in a convent, and my children can have my property at once. I can renounce the world, if such anticipated death conduces to the welfare of my daughter."

"Madame," said the old notary, "let us take time to consider and weigh, deliberately, the course we had best pursue to conciliate all interests."

" Good heavens! monsieur," cried Madame Évangélista, who saw defeat in delay, "everything has

already been considered and weighed. I was ignorant of what the process of marriage is in France; I am a Spaniard and a creole. I did not know that in order to marry my daughter it was necessary to reckon up the days which God may still grant me; that my child would suffer because I live; that I do harm by living, and by having lived! When my husband married me I had nothing but my name and my person. My name alone was a fortune to him, which dwarfed his own. What wealth can equal that of a great name? My dowry was beauty, virtue, happiness, birth, education. Can money give those treasures? If Natalie's father could overhear this conversation, his generous soul would be wounded forever, and his happiness in paradise destroyed. I dissipated, foolishly, perhaps, a few of his millions without a quiver ever coming to his eyelids. Since his death, I have grown economical and orderly in comparison with the life he encouraged me to lead — Come, let us break this thing off! Monsieur de Manerville is so disappointed that I — "

No descriptive language can express the confusion and shock which the words, "break off," introduced into the conversation. It is enough to say that these four apparently well-bred persons all talked at once.

"In Spain people marry in the Spanish fashion, or as they please; but in France they marry according to French law, sensibly, and as best they can," said Mathias.

"Ah, madame," cried Paul, coming out of his stupefaction, "you mistake my feelings."

"This is not a matter of feeling," said the old

notary, trying to stop his client from concessions. "We are concerned now with the interests and welfare of three generations. Have *we* wasted the missing millions? We are simply endeavoring to solve difficulties of which we are wholly guiltless."

"Marry us, and don't haggle," said Solonet.

"Haggle! do you call it haggling to defend the interests of father and mother and children?" said Mathias.

"Yes," said Paul, continuing his remarks to Madame Évangélista, "I deplore the extravagance of my youth, which does not permit me to stop this discussion, as you deplore your ignorance of business and your involuntary wastefulness. God is my witness that I am not thinking, at this moment, of myself. A simple life at Lanstrac does not alarm me; but how can I ask Mademoiselle Natalie to renounce her tastes, her habits? Her very existence would be changed."

"Where did Évangélista get his millions?" said the widow.

"Monsieur Évangélista was in business," replied the old notary; "he played in the great game of commerce; he despatched ships and made enormous sums; we are simply a landowner, whose capital is invested, whose income is fixed."

"There is still a way to harmonize all interests," said Solonet, uttering this sentence in a high falsetto tone, which silenced the other three and drew their eyes and their attention upon himself.

This young man was not unlike a skilful coachman who holds the reins of four horses, and amuses himself

by first exciting his animals and then subduing them. He had let loose these passions, and then, in turn, he calmed them, making Paul, whose life and happiness were in the balance, sweat in his harness, as well as his own client, who could not clearly see her way through this involved discussion.

"Madame Évangélista," he continued, after a slight pause, "can resign her investment in the Five-percents at once, and she can sell this house. I can get three hundred thousand for it by cutting the land into small lots. Out of that sum she can give you one hundred and fifty thousand francs. In this way she pays down nine hundred thousand of her daughter's patrimony, immediately. That, to be sure, is not all that she owes her daughter, but where will you find, in France, a better dowry?"

"Very good," said Maître Mathias; "but what, then, becomes of madame?"

At this question, which appeared to imply consent, Solonet said, softly, to himself, "Well done, old fox! I 've caught you!"

"Madame," he replied, aloud, "will keep the hundred and fifty thousand francs remaining from the sale of the house. This sum, added to the value of her furniture, can be invested in an annuity which will give her twenty thousand francs a year. Monsieur le comte can arrange to provide a residence for her under his roof. Lanstrac is a large house. You have also a house in Paris," he went on, addressing himself to Paul. "Madame can, therefore, live with you wherever you are. A widow with twenty thousand francs a year, and no household to maintain, is richer than

madame was when she possessed her whole fortune. Madame Évangélista has only this one daughter; Monsieur le comte is without relations; it will be many years before your heirs attain their majority; no conflict of interests is, therefore, to be feared. A mother-in-law and a son-in-law placed in such relations will form a household of united interests. Madame Évangélista can make up for the remaining deficit by paying a certain sum for her support from her annuity, which will ease your way. We know that madame is too generous and too large-minded to be willing to be a burden on her children. In this way you can make one household, united and happy, and be able to spend, in your own right, one hundred thousand francs a year. Is not that sum sufficient, Monsieur le comte, to enjoy, in all countries, the luxuries of life, and to satisfy all your wants and caprices? Believe me, a young couple often feel the need of a third member of the household; and, I ask you, what third member could be so desirable as a good mother?"

"A little paradise!" exclaimed the old notary.

Shocked to see his client's joy at this proposal, Mathias sat down on an ottoman, his head in his hands, plunged in reflections that were evidently painful. He knew well the involved phraseology in which notaries and lawyers wrap up, intentionally, malicious schemes, and he was not the man to be taken in by it. He now began, furtively, to watch his brother notary and Madame Évangélista as they conversed with Paul, endeavoring to detect some clew to the deep-laid plot which was beginning to appear upon the surface.

"Monsieur," said Paul to Solonet, "I thank you for the pains you take to conciliate our interests. This arrangement will solve all difficulties far more happily than I expected — if," he added, turning to Madame Évangélista, "it is agreeable to you, madame; for I could not desire anything that did not equally please you."

"I?" she said; "all that makes the happiness of my children is joy to me. Do not consider me in any way."

"That would not be right," said Paul, eagerly. "If your future is not honorably provided for, Natalie and I would suffer more than you would suffer for yourself."

"Don't be uneasy, Monsieur le comte," interposed Solonet.

"Ah!" thought old Mathias, "they 'll make him kiss the rod before they scourge him."

"You may feel quite satisfied," continued Solonet. "There are so many enterprises going on in Bordeaux at this moment that investments for annuities can be negotiated on very advantageous terms. After deducting from the proceeds of the house and furniture the hundred and fifty thousand francs we owe you, I think I can guarantee to madame that two hundred and fifty thousand will remain to her. I take upon myself to invest that sum in a first mortgage on property worth a million, and to obtain ten per cent for it, — twenty-five thousand francs a year. Consequently, we are marrying on nearly equal fortunes. In fact, against your forty-six thousand francs a year, Mademoiselle Natalie brings you forty thousand a year in the Five-

per-cents, and one hundred and fifty thousand in a round sum, which gives, in all, forty-seven thousand francs a year."

"That is evident," said Paul.

As he ended his speech, Solonet had cast a sidelong glance at his client, intercepted by Mathias, which meant: "Bring up your reserves."

"But," exclaimed Madame Évangélista, in toñes of joy that did not seem to be feigned, "I can give Natalie my diamonds; they are worth, at least, a hundred thousand francs."

"We can have them appraised," said the notary." "This will change the whole face of things. Madame can then keep the proceeds of her house, all but fifty thousand francs. Nothing will prevent Monsieur le comte from giving us a receipt in due form, as having received, in full, Mademoiselle Natalie's inheritance from her father; this will close, of course, the guardianship account. If madame, with Spanish generosity, robs herself in this way to fulfil her obligations, the least that her children can do is to give her a full receipt."

"Nothing could be more just than that," said Paul. "I am simply overwhelmed by these generous proposals."

"My daughter is another myself," said Madame Évangélista, softly.

Maître Mathias detected a look of joy on her face when she saw that the difficulties were being removed: that joy, and the previous forgetfulness of the diamonds which were now brought forward like fresh troops, confirmed his suspicions.

"The scene has been prepared between them as gamblers prepare the cards to ruin a pigeon," thought the old notary. "Is this poor boy, whom I saw born, doomed to be plucked alive by that woman, roasted by his very love, and devoured by his wife? I, who have nursed these fine estates for years with such care, am I to see them ruined in a single night? Three million and a half to be hypothecated for eleven hundred thousand francs these women will force him to squander!"

Discovering thus in the soul of the elder woman intentions which, without involving crime, theft, swindling, or any actually evil or blameworthy action, nevertheless belonged to all those criminalities in embryo, Maître Mathias felt neither sorrow nor generous indignation. He was not the Misanthrope; he was an old notary, accustomed in his business to the shrewd calculations of worldly people, to those clever bits of treachery which do more fatal injury than open murder on the high-road committed by some poor devil, who is guillotined in consequence. To the upper classes of society these passages in life, these diplomatic meetings and discussions are like the necessary cesspools where the filth of life is thrown. Full of pity for his client, Mathias cast a foreseeing eye into the future and saw nothing good.

"We 'll take the field with the same weapons," thought he, "and beat them."

At this moment, Paul, Solonet and Madame Évangélista, becoming embarrassed by the old man's silence, felt that the approval of that censor was necessary to carry out the transaction, and all three turned to him simultaneously.

"Well, my dear Monsieur Mathias, what do you think of it?" said Paul.

"This is what I think," said the conscientious and uncompromising notary. "You are not rich enough to commit such regal folly. The estate of Lanstrac, if estimated at three per cent on its rentals, represents, with its furniture, one million; the farms of Grassol and Guadet and your vineyard of Belle-Rose are worth another million; your two houses in Bordeaux and Paris, with their furniture, a third million. Against these three millions, yielding forty-seven thousand francs a year, Mademoiselle Natalie brings eight hundred thousand francs in the Five-per-cents, the diamonds (supposing them to be worth a hundred thousand francs, which is still problematical) and fifty thousand francs in money; in all, one million and fifty thousand francs. In presence of such facts my brother notary tells you boastfully that we are marrying equal fortunes! He expects us to encumber ourselves with a debt of eleven hundred and fifty-six thousand francs to our children by acknowledging the receipt of our wife's patrimony, when we have actually received but little more than a doubtful million. You are listening to such stuff with the rapture of a lover, and you think that old Mathias, who is not in love, can forget arithmetic, and will not point out the difference between landed estate, the actual value of which is enormous and constantly increasing, and the revenues of personal property, the capital of which is subject to fluctuations and diminishment of income. I am old enough to have learned that money dwindles and land augments. You have called me in, Monsieur

le comte, to stipulate for your interests; either let me defend those interests, or dismiss me."

"If monsieur is seeking a fortune equal in capital to his own," said Solonet, "we certainly cannot give it to him. We do not possess three millions and a half; nothing can be more evident. While you can boast of your three overwhelming millions, we can only produce our one poor million, — a mere nothing in your eyes, though three times the dowry of an archduchess of Austria. Bonaparte received only two hundred and fifty thousand francs with Maria-Louisa."

"Maria-Louisa was the ruin of Bonaparte," muttered Mathias.

Natalie's mother caught the words.

"If my sacrifices are worth nothing," she cried, "I do not choose to continue such a discussion; I trust to the discretion of Monsieur le comte, and I renounce the honor of his hand for my daughter."

According to the strategy marked out by the younger notary, this battle of contending interests had now reached the point where victory was certain for Madame Évangélista. The mother-in-law had opened her heart, delivered up her property, and was therefore practically released as her daughter's guardian. The future husband, under pain of ignoring the laws of generous propriety and being false to love, ought now to accept these conditions previously planned, and cleverly led up to by Solonet and Madame Évangélista. Like the hands of a clock turned by mechanism, Paul came faithfully up to time.

"Madame!" he exclaimed, "is it possible you can think of breaking off the marriage?"

"Monsieur," she replied, "to whom am I accountable? To my daughter. When she is twenty-one years of age she will receive my guardianship account and release me. She will then possess a million, and can, if she likes, choose her husband among the sons of the peers of France. She is a daughter of the Casa-Reale."

"Madame is right," remarked Solonet. "Why should she be more hardly pushed to-day than she will be fourteen months hence? You ought not to deprive her of the benefits of her maternity."

"Mathias!" cried Paul, in deep distress, "there are two sorts of ruin, and you are bringing one upon me at this moment."

He made a step toward the old notary, no doubt intending to tell him that the contract must be drawn at once. But Mathias stopped that disaster with a glance which said, distinctly, "Wait!" He saw the tears in Paul's eyes,— tears drawn from an honorable man by the shame of this discussion as much as by the peremptory speech of Madame Évangélista, threatening rupture, — and the old man stanched them with a gesture like that of Archimedes when he cried, "Eureka!" The words *peer of France* had been to him like a torch in a dark crypt.

Natalie appeared at this moment, dazzling as the dawn, saying, with infantine look and manner, "Am I in the way?"

"Singularly so, my child," answered her mother, in a bitter tone.

"Come in, dear Natalie," said Paul, taking her hand and leading her to a chair near the fireplace. "All is settled."

He felt it impossible to endure the overthrow of their mutual hopes.

"Yes, all can be settled," said Mathias, hastily interposing.

Like a general who, in a moment, upsets the plans skilfully laid and prepared by the enemy, the old notary, enlightened by that genius which presides over notaries, saw an idea, capable of saving the future of Paul and his children, unfolding itself in legal form before his eyes.

Maître Solonet, who perceived no other way out of these irreconcilable difficulties than the resolution with which Paul's love inspired him, and to which this conflict of feelings and thwarted interests had brought him, was extremely surprised at the sudden exclamation of his brother-notary. Curious to know the remedy that Mathias had found in a state of things which had seemed to him beyond all other relief, he said, addressing the old man: —

"What is it you propose?"

"Natalie, my dear child, leave us," said Madame Évangélista.

"Mademoiselle is not in the way," replied Mathias, smiling. "I am going to speak in her interests as well as in those of Monsieur le comte."

Silence reigned for a moment, during which time everybody present, oppressed with anxiety, awaited the allocution of the venerable notary with unspeakable curiosity.

"In these days," continued Maître Mathias, after a pause, "the profession of notary has changed from what it was. Political revolutions now exert an influ-

ence over the prospects of families, which never happened in former times. In those days existences were clearly defined; so were rank and position — "

"We are not here for a lecture on political economy, but to draw up a marriage contract," said Solonet, interrupting the old man, impatiently.

"I beg you to allow me to speak in my turn as I see fit," replied the other.

Solonet turned away and sat down on the ottoman, saying, in a low voice, to Madame Évangélista: —

"You will now hear what we call in the profession *balderdash*."

"Notaries are therefore compelled to follow the course of political events, which are now intimately connected with private interests. Here is an example: formerly noble families owned fortunes that were never shaken, but which the laws, promulgated by the Revolution, destroyed, and the present system tends to reconstruct," resumed the old notary, yielding to the loquacity of the *tabellionaris boa-constrictor* (boa-notary). "Monsieur le comte by his name, his talents, and his fortune is called upon to sit some day in the elective Chamber. Perhaps his destiny will take him to the hereditary Chamber, for we know that he has talent and means enough to fulfil that expectation. Do you not agree with me, madame?" he added, turning to the widow.

"You anticipate my dearest hope," she replied. "Monsieur de Manerville must be a peer of France, or I shall die of mortification."

"Therefore all that leads to that end — " continued Mathias with a cordial gesture to the astute mother-in-law.

"— will promote my eager desire," she replied.

"Well, then," said Mathias, "is not this marriage the proper occasion on which to entail the estate and create the family? Such a course would, undoubtedly, militate in the mind of the present government in favor of the nomination of my client whenever a batch of appointments is sent in. Monsieur le comte can very well afford to devote the estate of Lanstrac (which is worth a million) to this purpose. I do not ask that mademoiselle should contribute an equal sum; that would not be just. But we can surely apply eight hundred thousand of her patrimony to this object. There are two domains adjoining Lanstrac now to be sold, which can be purchased for that sum, which will return in rentals four and a half per cent. The house in Paris should be included in the entail. The surplus of the two fortunes, if judiciously managed, will amply suffice for the fortunes of the younger children. If the contracting parties will agree to this arrangement, Monsieur ought certainly to accept your guardianship account with its deficiency. I consent to that."

"*Questa coda non è di questo gatto* (That tail does n't belong to that cat)," murmured Madame Évangélista, appealing to Solonet.

"There 's a snake in the grass somewhere," answered Solonet, in a low voice, replying to the Italian proverb with a French one.

"Why do you make this fuss?" asked Paul, leading Mathias into the adjoining *salon*.

"To save you from being ruined," replied the old notary, in a whisper. "You are determined to marry

a girl and her mother who have already squandered two millions in seven years; you are pledging yourself to a debt of eleven hundred thousand francs to your children, to whom you will have to account for the fortune you are acknowledging to have received with their mother. You risk having your own fortune squandered in five years, and to be left as naked as Saint-John himself, besides being a debtor to your wife and children for enormous sums. If you are determined to put your life in that boat, Monsieur le comte, of course you can do as you choose; but at least let me, your old friend, try to save the house of Manerville."

"How is this scheme going to save it?" asked Paul.

"Monsieur le comte, you are in love —"

"Yes."

"A lover is about as discreet as a cannon-ball; therefore, I shall not explain. If you repeated what I should say, your marriage would probably be broken off. I protect your love by my silence. Have you confidence in my devotion?"

"A fine question!"

"Well, then, believe me when I tell you that Madame Évangélista, her notary, and her daughter, are tricking us through thick and thin; they are more than clever. *Tudieu!* what a sly game!"

"Not Natalie?" cried Paul.

"I sha'n't put my fingers between the bark and the tree," said the old man. "You want her, take her! But I wish you were well out of this marriage, if it could be done without the least wrong-doing on your part."

'Why do you wish it?"

"Because that girl will spend the mines of Peru. Besides, see how she rides a horse, — like the groom of a circus; she is half emancipated already. Such girls make bad wives."

Paul pressed the old man's hand, saying, with a confident air of self-conceit: —

"Don't be uneasy as to that! But now, at this moment, what am I to do?"

"Hold firm to my conditions. They will consent, for no one's apparent interest is injured. Madame Évangélista is very anxious to marry her daughter; I see that in her little game — Beware of her!"

Paul returned to the *salon*, where he found his future mother-in-law conversing in a low tone with Solonet, just as he himself had been conversing with Mathias. Natalie, kept outside of these mysterious conferences, was playing with a screen. Embarrassed by her position, she was thinking to herself: "How odd it is that they tell me nothing of my own affairs."

The younger notary had seized, in the main, the future effect of the new proposal, based, as it was, on the self-love of both parties, into which his client had fallen headlong. Now, while Mathias was more than a mere notary, Solonet was still a young man, and brought into his business the vanity of youth. It often happens that personal conceit makes a man forgetful of the interests of his client. In this case, Maître Solonet, who would not suffer the widow to think that Nestor had vanquished Achilles, advised her to conclude the marriage on the terms proposed. Little he cared for the future working of

the marriage contract; to him, the conditions of victory were: Madame Évangélista released from her obligations as guardian, her future secured, and Natalie married.

"Bordeaux shall know that you have ceded eleven hundred thousand francs to your daughter, and that you still have twenty-five thousand francs a year left," whispered Solonet to his client. "For my part, I did not expect to obtain such a fine result."

"But," she said, "explain to me why the creation of this entail should have calmed the storm at once."

"It relieves their distrust of you and of your daughter. An entail is unchangeable; neither husband nor wife can touch that capital."

"Then this arrangement is positively insulting!"

"No; we call it simply precaution. The old fellow has caught you in a net. If you refuse to consent to the entail, he can reply: 'Then your object is to squander the fortune of my client, who, by the creation of this entail, is protected from all such injury as securely as if the marriage took place under the *régime dotal.*'"

Solonet quieted his own scruples by reflecting: "After all, these stipulations will take effect only in the future, by which time Madame Évangélista will be dead and buried."

Madame Évangélista contented herself, for the present, with these explanations, having full confidence in Solonet. She was wholly ignorant of law; considering her daughter as good as married, she thought she had gained her end, and was filled with the joy of success. Thus, as Mathias had shrewdly calculated,

neither Solonet nor Madame Évangélista understood as yet, to its full extent, this scheme which he had based on reasons that were undeniable.

"Well, Monsieur Mathias," said the widow, "all is for the best, is it not?"

"Madame, if you and Monsieur le comte consent to this arrangement you ought to exchange pledges. It is fully understood, I suppose," he continued, looking from one to the other, "that the marriage will only take place on condition of creating an entail upon the estate of Lanstrac and the house in the rue de la Pepinière, together with eight hundred thousand francs in money brought by the future wife, the said sum to be invested in landed property? Pardon me the repetition, madame; but a positive and solemn engagement becomes absolutely necessary. The creation of an entail requires formalities, application to the chancellor, a royal ordinance, and we ought at once to conclude the purchase of the new estate in order that the property be included in the royal ordinance by virtue of which it becomes inalienable. In many families this would be reduced to writing, but on this occasion I think a simple consent will suffice. Do you consent?"

"Yes," replied Madame Évangélista.

"Yes," said Paul.

"And I?" asked Natalie, laughing.

"You are a minor, mademoiselle," replied Solonet; "don't complain of that."

It was then agreed that Maître Mathias should draw up the contract, Maître Solonet the guardianship account and release, and that both documents should

be signed, as the law requires some days before the celebration of the marriage. After a few polite salutations the notaries withdrew.

"It rains, Mathias; shall I take you home?" said Solonet. "My cabriolet is here."

"My carriage is here, too," said Paul, manifesting an intention to accompany the old man.

"I won't rob you of a moment's pleasure," said Mathias. "I accept my friend Solonet's offer."

"Well," said Achilles to Nestor, as the cabriolet rolled away, "you have been truly patriarchal to-night. The fact is, those young people would certainly have ruined themselves."

"I felt anxious about their future," replied Mathias, keeping silence as to the real motives of his proposition.

At this moment the two notaries were like a pair of actors arm in arm behind the stage on which they have played a scene of hatred and provocation.

"But," said Solonet, thinking of his rights as notary, "is n't it my place to buy that land you mentioned? The money is part of our dowry."

"How can you put property bought in the name of Mademoiselle Évangélista into the creation of an entail by the Comte de Manerville?" replied Mathias.

"We shall have to ask the chancellor about that," said Solonet.

"But I am the notary of the seller as well as of the buyer of that land," said Mathias. "Besides, Monsieur de Manerville can buy in his own name. At the time of payment we can make mention of the fact that the dowry funds are put into it."

"You 've an answer for everything, old man," said Solonet, laughing. "You were really surpassing to-night; you beat us squarely."

"For an old fellow who did n't expect your batteries of grape-shot, I did pretty well, did n't I?"

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Solonet.

The odious struggle in which the material welfare of a family had been so perilously near destruction was to the two notaries nothing more than a matter of professional polemics.

"I have n't been forty years in harness for nothing," remarked Mathias. "Look here, Solonet," he added, "I 'm a good fellow; you shall help in drawing the deeds for the sale of those lands."

"Thanks, my dear Mathias. I 'll serve you in return on the very first occasion."

While the two notaries were peacefully returning homeward, with no other sensations than a little throaty warmth, Paul and Madame Évangélista were left a prey to the nervous trepidation, the quivering of the flesh and brain which excitable natures pass through after a scene in which their interests and their feelings have been violently shaken. In Madame Évangélista these last mutterings of the storm were overshadowed by a terrible reflection, a lurid gleam which she wanted, at any cost, to dispel.

"Has Maître Mathias destroyed in a few minutes the work I have been doing for six months?" she asked herself. "Was he withdrawing Paul from my influence by filling his mind with suspicion during their secret conference in the next room?"

She was standing absorbed in these thoughts before

the fireplace, her elbow resting on the marble mantelshelf. When the *porte-cochère* closed behind the carriage of the two notaries, she turned to her future son-in-law, impatient to solve her doubts.

"This has been the most terrible day of my life," cried Paul, overjoyed to see all difficulties vanish. "I know no one so downright in speech as that old Mathias. May God hear him, and make me peer of France! Dear Natalie, I desire this for your sake more than for my own. You are my ambition; I live only in you."

Hearing this speech uttered in the accents of the heart, and noting, more especially, the limpid azure of Paul's eyes, whose glance betrayed no thought of double meaning, Madame Évangélista's satisfaction was complete. She regretted the sharp language with which she had spurred him, and in the joy of success she resolved to reassure him as to the future. Calming her countenance, and giving to her eyes that expression of tender friendship which made her so attractive, she smiled and answered: —

"I can say as much to you. Perhaps, dear Paul, my Spanish nature led me farther than my heart desired. Be what you are, — kind as God himself, — and do not be angry with me for a few hasty words. Shake hands."

Paul was abashed; he fancied himself to blame, and he kissed Madame Évangélista.

"Dear Paul," she said with much emotion, "why could not those two sharks have settled this matter without dragging us into it, since it was so easy to settle?"

"In that case I should not have known how grand and generous you can be," replied Paul.

"Indeed she is, Paul!" cried Natalie, pressing his hand.

"We have still a few little matters to settle, my dear son," said Madame Évangélista. "My daughter and I are above the foolish vanities to which so many persons cling. Natalie does not need my diamonds, but I am glad to give them to her."

"Ah! my dear mother, do you suppose that I will accept them?"

"Yes, my child; they are one of the conditions of the contract."

"I will not allow it; I will not marry at all," cried Natalie, vehemently. "Keep those jewels which my father took such pride in collecting for you. How could Monsieur Paul exact —"

"Hush, my dear," said her mother, whose eyes now filled with tears. "My ignorance of business compels me to a greater sacrifice than that."

"What sacrifice?"

"I must sell my house in order to pay the money that I owe to you."

"What money can you possibly owe to me?" she said; "to me, who owe you life! If my marriage costs you the slightest sacrifice, I will not marry."

"Child!"

"Dear Natalie, try to understand that neither I, nor your mother, nor you yourself, require these sacrifices, but our children."

"Suppose I do not marry at all?"

"Do you not love me?" said Paul, tenderly.

"Come, come, my silly child; do you imagine that a contract is like a house of cards which you can blow down at will? Dear little ignoramus, you don't know what trouble we have had to found an entail for the benefit of your eldest son. Don't cast us back into the discussions from which we have just escaped."

"Why do you wish to ruin my mother?" said Natalie, looking at Paul.

"Why are you so rich?" he replied, smiling.

"Don't quarrel, my children, you are not yet married," said Madame Évangélista. "Paul," she continued, "you are not to give either corbeille, or jewels, or trousseau. Natalie has everything in profusion. Lay by the money you would otherwise put into wedding presents. I know nothing more stupidly bourgeois and commonplace than to spend a hundred thousand francs on a corbeille, when five thousand a year given to a young woman saves her much anxiety and lasts her lifetime. Besides, the money for a corbeille is needed to decorate your house in Paris. We will return to Lanstrac in the spring; for Solonet is to settle my debts during the winter."

"All is for the best," cried Paul, at the summit of happiness."

"So I shall see Paris!" cried Natalie, in a tone that would justly have alarmed de Marsay.

"If we decide upon this plan," said Paul, "I'll write to de Marsay and get him to take a box for me at the Bouffons and also at the Italian opera."

"You are very kind; I should never have dared to ask for it," said Natalie. "Marriage is a very agree-

able institution if it gives husbands a talent for divining the wishes of their wives."

"It is nothing else," replied Paul. "But see how late it is; I ought to go."

"Why leave so soon to-night?" said Madame Évangélista, employing those coaxing ways to which men are so sensitive.

Though all this passed on the best of terms, and according to the laws of the most exquisite politeness, the effect of the discussion of these contending interests had, nevertheless, cast between son and mother-in-law a seed of distrust and enmity which was liable to sprout under the first heat of anger, or the warmth of a feeling too harshly bruised. In most families the settlement of *dots* and the deeds of gift required by a marriage contract give rise to primitive emotions of hostility, caused by self-love, by the lesion of certain sentiments, by regret for the sacrifices made, and by the desire to diminish them. When difficulties arise there is always a victorious side and a vanquished one. The parents of the future pair try to conclude the matter, which is purely commercial in their eyes, to their own advantage; and this leads to the trickery, shrewdness, and deception of such negotiations. Generally the husband alone is initiated into the secret of these discussions, and the wife is kept, like Natalie, in ignorance of the stipulations which make her rich or poor.

As he left the house, Paul reflected that, thanks to the cleverness of his notary, his fortune was almost entirely secured from injury. If Madame Évangélista did not live apart from her daughter their united

household would have an income of more than a hundred thousand francs to spend. All his expectations of a happy and comfortable life would be realized.

"My mother-in-law seems to me an excellent woman," he thought, still under the influence of the cajoling manner by which she had endeavored to disperse the clouds raised by the discussion. "Mathias is mistaken. These notaries are strange fellows; they envenom everything. The harm started from that little cock-sparrow Solonet, who wanted to play a clever game."

While Paul went to bed recapitulating the advantages he had won during the evening, Madame Évangélista was congratulating herself equally on her victory.

"Well, darling mother, are you satisfied?" said Natalie, following Madame Évangélista into her bedroom.

"Yes, love," replied the mother, "everything went well, according to my wishes; I feel a weight lifted from my shoulders which was crushing me. Paul is a most easy-going man. Dear fellow! yes, certainly, we must make his life prosperous. You will make him happy, and I will be responsible for his political success. The Spanish ambassador used to be a friend of mine, and I 'll renew the relation — as I will with the rest of my old acquaintance. Oh! you 'll see! we shall soon be in the very heart of Parisian life; all will be enjoyment for us. You shall have the pleasures, my dearest, and I the last occupation of existence, — the game of ambition! Don't be alarmed when you see me selling this house. Do you suppose we shall ever

come back to live in Bordeaux? no. Lanstrac? yes. But we shall spend all our winters in Paris, where our real interests will be. Well, Natalie, tell me, was it very difficult to do what I asked of you?"

"My little mamma! every now and then I felt ashamed."

"Solonet advises me to put the proceeds of this house into an annuity," said Madame Évangélista, "but I shall do otherwise; I won't take a penny of my fortune from you."

"I saw you were all very angry," said Natalie. "How did the tempest calm down?"

"By an offer of my diamonds," replied Madame Évangélista. "Solonet was right. How ably he conducted the whole affair. Get out my jewel-case, Natalie. I have never seriously considered what my diamonds are worth. When I said a hundred thousand francs I talked nonsense. Madame de Gyas always declared that the necklace and ear-rings your father gave me on our marriage day were worth at least that sum. My poor husband was so lavish! Then my family diamond, the one Philip the Second gave to the Duke of Alba, and which my aunt bequeathed to me, the *Discreto*, was, I think, appraised in former times at four thousand quadruples,— one of our Spanish gold coins.

Natalie laid out upon her mother's toilet-table the pearl necklace, the sets of jewels, the gold bracelets and precious stones of all description, with that inexpressible sensation enjoyed by certain women at the sight of such treasures, by which — so commentators on the Talmud say — the fallen angels seduce the

daughters of men, having sought these flowers of celestial fire in the bowels of the earth.

"Certainly," said Madame Évangélista, "though I know nothing about jewels except how to accept and wear them, I think there must be a great deal of money in these. Then, if we make but one household, I can sell my plate, the weight of which, as mere silver, would bring thirty thousand francs. I remember when we brought it from Lima, the custom-house officers weighed and appraised it. Solonet is right. I 'll send to-morrow to Élie Magus. The Jew shall estimate the value of these things. Perhaps I can avoid sinking any of my fortune in an annuity."

"What a beautiful pearl necklace!" said Natalie.

"He ought to give it to you, if he loves you," replied her mother; "and I think he might have all my other jewels reset and let you keep them. The diamonds are a part of your property in the contract. And now, good-night, my darling. After the fatigues of this day we both need rest."

The woman of luxury, the creole, the great lady, incapable of analyzing the results of a contract which was not yet in force, went to sleep in the joy of seeing her daughter married to a man who was easy to manage, who would let them both be mistresses of his home, and whose fortune, united to theirs, would require no change in their way of living. Thus having settled her account with her daughter, whose patrimony was acknowledged in the contract, Madame Évangélista could feel at her ease.

"How foolish of me to worry as I did," she thought. "But I wish the marriage were well over."

So Madame Évangélista, Paul, Natalie, and the two notaries were equally satisfied with the first day's result. The Te Deum was sung in both camps, — a dangerous situation; for there comes a moment when the vanquished side is aware of its mistake. To Madame Évangélista's mind, her son-in-law was the vanquished side.

IV.

THE MARRIAGE-CONTRACT — SECOND DAY.

The next day Élie Magus (who happened at that time to be in Bordeaux) obeyed Madame Évangélista's summons, believing, from general rumor as to the marriage of Comte Paul with Mademoiselle Natalie, that it concerned a purchase of jewels for the bride. The Jew was, therefore, astonished when he learned that, on the contrary, he was sent for to estimate the value of the mother-in-law's property. The instinct of his race, as well as certain insidious questions, made him aware that the value of the diamonds was included in the marriage-contract. The stones were not to be sold, and yet he was to estimate them as if some private person were buying them from a dealer. Jewellers alone know how to distinguish between the diamonds of Asia and those of Brazil. The stones of Golconda and Visapur are known by a whiteness and glittering brilliancy which others have not, — the water of the Brazilian diamonds having a yellow tinge which reduces their selling value. Madame Évangélista's necklace and ear-rings, being composed entirely of Asiatic diamonds, were valued by Elie Magus at two hundred and fifty thousand francs. As for the *Discreto*, he pronounced it one of the finest diamonds

in the possession of private persons; it was known to the trade and valued at one hundred thousand francs. On hearing this estimate, which proved to her the lavishness of her husband, Madame Évangélista asked the old Jew whether she should be able to obtain that money immediately.

"Madame," replied the Jew, "if you wish to sell I can give you only seventy-five thousand for the brilliant, and one hundred and sixty thousand for the necklace and earrings."

"Why such reduction?"

"Madame," replied Magus," the finer the diamond, the longer we keep it unsold. The rarity of such investments is one reason for the high value set upon precious stones. As the merchant cannot lose the interest of his money, this additional sum, joined to the rise and fall to which such merchandise is subject, explains the difference between the price of purchase and the price of sale. By owning these diamonds you have lost the interest on three hundred thousand francs for twenty years. If you wear your jewels ten times a year, it costs you three thousand francs each evening to put them on. How many beautiful gowns you could buy with that sum. Those who own diamonds are, therefore, very foolish; but, luckily for us, women are never willing to understand the calculation."

"I thank you for explaining it to me, and I shall profit by it."

"Do you wish to sell?" asked Magus, eagerly.

"What are the other jewels worth?"

The Jew examined the gold of the settings, held the

pearls to the light, scrutinized the rubies, the diadems, clasps, bracelets, and chains, and said, in a mumbling tone: —

"A good many Portuguese diamonds from Brazil are among them. They are not worth more than a hundred thousand to me. But," he added, "a dealer would sell them to a customer for one hundred and fifty thousand, at least."

"I shall keep them," said Madame Évangélista.

"You are wrong," replied Elie Magus. "With the income from the sum they represent you could buy just as fine diamonds in five years, and have the capital to boot."

This singular conference became known, and corroborated certain rumors excited by the discussion of the contract. The servants of the house, overhearing high voices, supposed the difficulties greater than they really were. Their gossip with other valets spread the information, which from the lower regions rose to the ears of the masters. The attention of society, and of the town in general, became so fixed on the marriage of two persons equally rich and well-born, that every one, great and small, busied themselves about the matter, and in less than a week the strangest rumors were bruited about.

"Madame Évangélista sells her house; she must be ruined. She offered her diamonds to Élie Magus. Nothing is really settled between herself and the Comte de Manerville. Is it probable that the marriage will ever take place?"

To this question some answered yes, and others said no. The two notaries, when questioned, denied

these calumnies, and declared that the difficulties arose only from the official delay in constituting the entail. But when public opinion has taken a trend in one direction it is very difficult to turn it back. Though Paul went every day to Madame Évangélista's house, and though the notaries denied these assertions continually, the whispered calumny went on. Young girls, and their mothers and aunts, vexed at a marriage they had dreamed of for themselves or for their families, could not forgive the Spanish ladies for their happiness, as authors cannot forgive each other for their success. A few persons revenged themselves for the twenty-years luxury and grandeur of the family of Évangélista, which had lain heavily on their self-love. A leading personage at the prefecture declared that the notaries could have chosen no other language and followed no other conduct in the case of a rupture. The time actually required for the establishment of the entail confirmed the suspicions of the Bordeaux provincials.

"They will keep the ball going through the winter; then, in the spring, they will go to some watering-place, and we shall learn before the year is out that the marriage is off."

"And, of course, we shall be given to understand," said others, "for the sake of the honor of the two families, that the difficulties did not come from either side, but the chancellor refused to consent; you may be sure it will be some quibble about that entail which will cause the rupture."

"Madame Évangélista," some said, "lived in a style that the mines of Valenciana could n't meet.

When the time came to melt the bell, and pay the daughter's patrimony, nothing would be found to pay it with."

The occasion was excellent to add up the spendings of the handsome widow and prove, categorically, her ruin. Rumors were so rife that bets were made for and against the marriage. By the laws of worldly jurisprudence this gossip was not allowed to reach the ears of the parties concerned. No one was enemy or friend enough to Paul or to Madame Évangélista to inform either of what was being said. Paul had some business at Lanstrac, and used the occasion to make a hunting-party for several of the young men of Bordeaux,— a sort of farewell, as it were, to his bachelor life. This hunting party was accepted by society as a signal confirmation of public suspicion.

When this event occurred, Madame de Gyas, who had a daughter to marry, thought it high time to sound the matter, and to condole, with joyful heart, the blow received by the Évangélistas. Natalie and her mother were somewhat surprised to see the lengthened face of the marquise, and they asked at once if anything distressing had happened to her.

"Can it be," she replied, "that you are ignorant of the rumors that are circulating? Though I think them false myself, I have come to learn the truth in order to stop this gossip, at any rate among the circle of my own friends. To be the dupes or the accomplices of such an error is too false a position for true friends to occupy."

"But what is it? what has happened?" asked mother and daughter.

Madame de Gyas thereupon allowed herself the happiness of repeating all the current gossip, not sparing her two friends a single stab. Natalie and Madame Evangélista looked at each other and laughed, but they fully understood the meaning of the tale and the motives of their friend. The Spanish lady took her revenge very much as Célimène took hers on Arsinoë.

"My dear, are you ignorant — you who know the provinces so well — can you be ignorant of what a mother is capable when she has on her hands a daughter whom she cannot marry for want of *dot* and lovers, want of beauty, want of mind, and, sometimes, want of everything? Why, a mother in that position would rob a diligence or commit a murder, or wait for a man at the corner of a street — she would sacrifice herself twenty times over, if she was a mother at all. Now, as you and I both know, there are many such in that situation in Bordeaux, and no doubt they attribute to us their own thoughts and actions. Naturalists have depicted the habits and customs of many ferocious animals, but they have forgotten the mother and daughter in quest of a husband. Such women are hyenas, going about, as the Psalmist says, seeking whom they may devour, and adding to the instinct of the brute the intellect of man, and the genius of woman. I can understand that those little spiders, Mademoiselle de Belor, Mademoiselle de Trans, and others, after working so long at their webs without catching a fly, without so much as hearing a buzz, should be furious; I can even forgive their spiteful speeches. But that you, who can marry your daughter when you please, you, who are rich and titled, you

who have nothing of the provincial about you, whose daughter is clever and possesses fine qualities, with beauty and the power to choose — that you, so distinguished from the rest by your Parisian grace, should have paid the least heed to this talk does really surprise me. Am I bound to account to the public for the marriage stipulations which our notaries think necessary under the political circumstances of my son-in-law's future life? Has the mania for public discussion made its way into families? Ought I to convoke in writing the fathers and mothers of the province to come here and give their vote on the clauses of our marriage contract?"

A torrent of epigram flowed over Bordeaux. Madame Évangélista was about to leave the city, and could safely scan her friends and enemies, caricature them and lash them as she pleased, with nothing to fear in return. Accordingly, she now gave vent to her secret observations and her latent dislikes as she sought for the reason why this or that person denied the shining of the sun at mid-day.

"But, my dear," said the Marquise de Gyas, "this stay of the count at Lanstrac, these parties given to young men under such circumstances — "

"Ah! my dear," said the great lady, interrupting the marquise, "do you suppose that we adopt the pettiness of bourgeois customs? Is Count Paul held in bonds like a man who might seek to get away? Think you we ought to watch him with a squad of gendarmes lest some provincial conspiracy should get him away from us?"

"Be assured, my dearest friend, that it gives me the greatest pleasure to — "

Here her words were interrupted by a footman who entered the room to announce Paul. Like many lovers, Paul thought it charming to ride twelve miles to spend an hour with Natalie. He had left his friends while hunting, and came in booted and spurred, and whip in hand.

"Dear Paul," said Natalie, "you don't know what an answer you are giving to madame."

When Paul heard of the gossip that was current in Bordeaux, he laughed instead of being angry.

"These worthy people have found out, perhaps, that there will be no wedding festivities, according to provincial usages, no marriage at mid-day in the church, and they are furious. Well, my dear mother," he added, kissing her hand, "let us pacify them with a ball on the day when we sign the contract, just as the government flings a fête to the people in the great square of the Champs-Élysées, and we will give our dear friends the dolorous pleasure of signing a marriage-contract such as they have seldom heard of in the provinces."

This little incident proved of great importance. Madame Évangélista invited all Bordeaux to witness the signature of the contract, and showed her intention of displaying in this last fête a luxury which should refute the foolish lies of the community.

The preparations for this event required over a month, and it was called the fête of the camellias. Immense quantities of that beautiful flower were massed on the staircase, and in the antechamber and supper-room. During this month the formalities for constituting the entail were concluded in Paris; the

estates adjoining Lanstrac were purchased, the banns were published, and all doubts finally dissipated. Friends and enemies thought only of preparing their toilets for the coming fête.

The time occupied by these events obscured the difficulties raised by the first discussion, and swept into oblivion the words and arguments of that stormy conference. Neither Paul nor his mother-in-law continued to think of them. Were they not, after all, as Madame Évangélista had said, the affair of the two notaries?

But — to whom has it never happened, when life is in its fullest flow, to be suddenly challenged by the voice of memory, raised, perhaps, too late, reminding us of some important fact, some threatened danger? On the morning of the day when the contract was to be signed and the fête given, one of these flashes of the soul illuminated the mind of Madame Évangélista during the semi-somnolence of her waking hour. The words that she herself had uttered at the moment when Mathias acceded to Solonet's condition, *Questa coda non è di questo gatto*, were cried aloud in her mind by that voice of memory. In spite of her incapacity for business, Madame Évangélista's shrewdness told her: —

"If so clever a notary as Mathias was pacified, it must have been that he saw compensation at the cost of *some one.*"

That some one could not be Paul, as she had blindly hoped. Could it be that her daughter's fortune was to pay the costs of war? She resolved to demand explanations on the tenor of the contract, not reflect-

ing on the course she would have to take in case she found her interests seriously compromised. This day had so powerful an influence on Paul de Manerville's conjugal life that it is necessary to explain certain of the external circumstances which accompanied it.

Madame Évangélista had shrunk from no expense for this dazzling fête. The court-yard was gravelled and converted into a tent, and filled with shrubs, although it was winter. The camellias, of which so much had been said from Angoulême to Dax, were banked on the staircase and in the vestibules. Wall partitions had disappeared to enlarge the supper-room and the ball-room where the dancing was to be. Bordeaux, a city famous for the luxury of colonial fortunes, was on a tiptoe of expectation for this scene of fairyland. About eight o'clock, as the last discussion of the contract was taking place within the house, the inquisitive populace, anxious to see the ladies in full dress getting out of their carriages, formed in two hedges on either side of the *porte-cochère.* Thus the sumptuous atmosphere of a fête acted upon all minds at the moment when the contract was being signed, illuminating colored lamps lighted up the shrubs, and the wheels of the arriving guests echoed from the court-yard. The two notaries had dined with the bridal pair and their mother. Mathias's head-clerk, whose business it was to receive the signatures of the guests during the evening (taking due care that the contract was not surreptitiously read by the signers), was also present at the dinner.

No bridal toilet was ever comparable with that of Natalie, whose beauty, decked with laces and satin,

her hair coquettishly falling in a myriad of curls about her throat, resembled that of a flower encased in its foliage. Madame Évangélista, robed in a gown of cherry velvet, a color judiciously chosen to heighten the brilliancy of her skin and her black hair and eyes, glowed with the beauty of a woman at forty, and wore her pearl necklace, clasped with the *Discreto*, a visible contradiction to the late calumnies.

To fully explain this scene, it is necessary to say that Paul and Natalie sat together on a sofa beside the fireplace and paid no attention to the reading of the documents. Equally childish and equally happy, regarding life as a cloudless sky, rich, young, and loving, they chattered to each other in a low voice, sinking into whispers. Arming his love with the presence of legality, Paul took delight in kissing the tips of Natalie's fingers, in lightly touching her snowy shoulders and the waving curls of her hair, hiding from the eyes of others these joys of illegal emancipation. Natalie played with a screen of peacock's feathers given to her by Paul, — a gift which is to love, according to superstitious belief in certain countries, as dangerous an omen as the gift of scissors or other cutting instruments, which recall, no doubt, the Parces of antiquity.

Seated beside the two notaries, Madame Évangélista gave her closest attention to the reading of the documents. After listening to the guardianship account, most ably written out by Solonet, in which Natalie's share of the three million and more francs left by Monsieur Évangélista was shown to be the much-debated eleven hundred and fifty-six thousand,

Madame Évangélista said to the heedless young couple: —

"Come, listen, listen, my children; this is your marriage contract."

The clerk drank a glass of iced-water, Solonet and Mathias blew their noses, Paul and Natalie looked at the four personages before them, listened to the preamble, and returned to their chatter. The statement of the property brought by each party; the general deed of gift in the event of death without issue; the deed of gift of one-fourth in life-interest and one-fourth in capital without interest, allowed by the Code, whatever be the number of the children; the constitution of a common fund for husband and wife; the settlement of the diamonds on the wife, the library and horses on the husband, were duly read and passed without observations. Then followed the constitution of the entail. When all was read and nothing remained but to sign the contract, Madame Évangélista demanded to know what would be the ultimate effect of the entail.

"An entail, madame," replied Solonet, "means an inalienable right to the inheritance of certain property belonging to both husband and wife, which is settled from generation to generation on the eldest son of the house, without, however, depriving him of his right to share in the division of the rest of the property."

"What will be the effect of this on my daughter's rights?"

Maître Mathias, incapable of disguising the truth, replied: —

"Madame, an entail being an appanage, or portion

of property set aside for this purpose from the fortunes of husband and wife, it follows that if the wife dies first, leaving several children, one of them a son, Monsieur de Manerville will owe those children three hundred and sixty thousand francs only, from which he will deduct his fourth in life-interest and his fourth in capital. Thus his debt to those children will be reduced to one hundred and sixty thousand francs, or thereabouts, exclusive of his savings and profits from the common fund constituted for husband and wife. If, on the contrary, he dies first, leaving a male heir, Madame de Manerville has a right to three hundred and sixty thousand francs only, and to her deeds of gift of such of her husband's property as is not included in the entail, to the diamonds now settled upon her, and to her profits and savings from the common fund."

The effect of Maître Mathias's astute and far-sighted policy were now plainly seen.

"My daughter is ruined," said Madame Évangélista in a low voice.

The old and the young notary both overheard the words.

"Is it ruin," replied Mathias, speaking gently, "to constitute for her family an indestructible fortune?"

The younger notary, seeing the expression of his client's face, thought it judicious in him to state the disaster in plain terms.

"We tried to trick them out of three hundred thousand francs," he whispered to the angry woman. "They have actually laid hold of eight hundred thousand; it is a loss of four hundred thousand from our interests

for the benefit of the children. You must now either break the marriage off at once, or carry it through," concluded Solonet.

It is impossible to describe the moment of silence that followed. Maître Mathias waited in triumph the signature of the two persons who had expected to rob his client. Natalie, not competent to understand that she had lost half her fortune, and Paul, ignorant that the house of Manerville had gained it, were laughing and chattering still Solonet and Madame Évangélista gazed at each other; the one endeavoring to conceal his indifference, the other repressing the rush of a crowd of bitter feelings.

After suffering in her own mind the struggles of remorse, after blaming Paul as the cause of her dishonesty, Madame Évangélista had decided to employ those shameful manœuvres to cast on him the burden of her own unfaithful guardianship, considering him her victim. But now, in a moment, she perceived that where she thought she triumphed she was about to perish, and her victim was her own daughter. Guilty without profit, she saw herself the dupe of an honorable old man, whose respect she had doubtless lost. Her secret conduct must have inspired the stipulation of old Mathias; and Mathias must have enlightened Paul. Horrible reflection! Even if he had not yet done so, as soon as that contract was signed the old wolf would surely warn his client of the dangers he had run and had now escaped, were it only to receive the praise of his sagacity. He would put him on his guard against the wily woman who had lowered herself to this conspiracy; he would destroy

the empire she had conquered over her son-in-law! Feeble natures, once warned, turn obstinate, and are never won again. At the first discussion of the contract she had reckoned on Paul's weakness, and on the impossibility he would feel of breaking off a marriage so far advanced. But now, she herself was far more tightly bound. Three months earlier Paul had no real obstacles to prevent the rupture; now, all Bordeaux knew that the notaries had smoothed the difficulties; the banns were published; the wedding was to take place immediately; the friends of both families were at that moment arriving for the fête, and to witness the contract. How could she postpone the marriage at this late hour? The cause of the rupture would surely be made known; Maître Mathias's stern honor was too well known in Bordeaux; his word would be believed in preference to hers. The scoffers would turn against her and against her daughter. No, she could not break it off; she must yield!

These reflections, so cruelly sound, fell upon Madame Évangélista's brain like a water-spout and split it. Though she still maintained the dignity and reserve of a diplomatist, her chin was shaken by that apoplectic movement which showed the anger of Catherine the Second on the famous day when, seated on her throne and in presence of her court (very much in the present circumstances of Madame Évangélista), she was braved by the King of Sweden. Solonet observed that play of the muscles, which revealed the birth of a mortal hatred, a lurid storm to which there was no lightning. At this moment Madame Évangélista vowed to her son-in-law one of those unquenchable

hatreds the seeds of which were left by the Moors in the atmosphere of Spain.

"Monsieur," she said, bending to the ear of her notary, "you called that stipulation balderdash; it seems to me that nothing could have been more clear."

"Madame, allow me — "

"Monsieur," she continued, paying no heed to his interruption, "if you did not perceive the effect of that entail at the time of our first conference, it is very extraordinary that it did not occur to you in the silence of your study. This can hardly be incapacity."

The young notary drew his client into the next room, saying to himself, as he did so: —

"I get a three-thousand-franc fee for the guardianship account, three thousand for the contract, six thousand on the sale of the house, fifteen thousand in all — better not be angry."

He closed the door, cast on Madame Évangélista the cool look of a business man, and said: —

"Madame, having, for your sake, passed — as I did — the proper limits of legal craft, do you seriously intend to reward my devotion by such language?"

"But, monsieur — "

"Madame, I did not, it is true, calculate the effect of the deeds of gift. But if you do not wish Comte Paul for your son-in-law you are not obliged to accept him. The contract is not signed. Give your fête, and postpone the signing. It is far better to brave Bordeaux than sacrifice yourself."

"How can I justify such a course to society, which is already prejudiced against us by the slow conclusion of the marriage?"

"By some error committed in Paris; some missing document not sent with the rest," replied Solonet.

"But those purchases of land near Lanstrac?"

"Monsieur de Manerville will be at no loss to find another bride and another dowry."

"Yes, he 'll lose nothing; but we lose all, all!"

"You?" replied Solonet; "why, you can easily find another count who will cost you less money, if a title is the chief object of this marriage."

"No, no! we can't stake our honor in that way. I am caught in a trap, monsieur. All Bordeaux will ring with this to-morrow. Our solemn words are pledged — "

"You wish the happiness of Mademoiselle Natalie."

"Above all things."

"To be happy in France," said the notary, "means being mistress of the home. She can lead that fool of a Manerville by the nose if she chooses; he is so dull he has actually seen nothing of all this. Even if he now distrusts you, he will always trust his wife; and his wife is *you*, is she not? The count's fate is still within your power if you choose to play the cards in your hand."

"If that were true, monsieur, I know not what I would not do to show my gratitude," she said, in a transport of feeling that colored her cheeks.

"Let us now return to the others, madame," said Solonet. "Listen carefully to what I shall say; and then — you shall think me incapable if you choose."

"My dear friend," said the young notary to Maître Mathias, "in spite of your great ability, you have not foreseen either the case of Monsieur de Manerville

dying without children, nor that in which he leaves only female issue. In either of those cases the entail would pass to the Manervilles, or, at any rate, give rise to suits on their part. I think, therefore, it is necessary to stipulate that in the first case the entailed property shall pass under the general deed of gift between husband and wife; and in the second case that the entail be declared void. This agreement concerns the wife's interest."

"Both clauses seem to me perfectly just," said Maître Mathias. "As to their ratification, Monsieur le comte can, doubtless, come to an understanding with the chancellor, if necessary."

Solonet took a pen and added this momentous clause on the margin of the contract. Paul and Natalie paid no attention to the matter; but Madame Évangélista dropped her eyes while Maître Mathias read the added sentence aloud.

"We will now sign," said the mother.

The volume of voice which Madame Évangélista repressed as she uttered those words betrayed her violent emotion. She was thinking to herself: "No, my daughter shall not be ruined — but he! My daughter shall have the name, the title, and the fortune. If she should some day discover that she does not love him, that she loves another, irresistibly, Paul shall be driven out of France! My daughter shall be free, and happy, and rich."

If Maître Mathias understood how to analyze business interests, he knew little of the analysis of human passions. He accepted Madame Évangélista's words as an honorable *amende*, instead of judging them for

what they were, a declaration of war. While Solonet and his clerk superintended Natalie as she signed the documents,— an operation which took time, — Mathias took Paul aside and told him the meaning of the stipulation by which he had saved him from ultimate ruin.

"The whole affair is now *en regle*. I hold the documents. But the contract contains a receipt for the diamonds; you must ask for them. Business is business. Diamonds are going up just now, but may go down. The purchase of those new domains justifies you in turning everything into money that you can. Therefore, Monsieur le comte, have no false modesty in this matter. The first payment is due after the formalities are over. The sum is two hundred thousand francs; put the diamonds into that. You have the lien on this house, which will be sold at once, and will pay the rest. If you have the courage to spend only fifty thousand francs for the next three years, you can save the two hundred thousand francs you are now obliged to pay. If you plant vineyards on your new estates, you can get an income of over twenty-five thousand francs upon them. You may be said, in short, to have made a good marriage."

Paul pressed the hand of his old friend very affectionately, a gesture which did not escape Madame Évangélista, who now came forward to offer him the pen. Suspicion became certainty to her mind. She was confident that Paul and Mathias had come to an understanding about her. Rage and hatred sent the blood surging through her veins to her heart. The worst had come.

After verifying that all the documents were duly signed and the initials of the parties affixed to the bottom of the leaves, Maître Mathias looked from Paul to his mother-in-law, and seeing that his client did not intend to speak of the diamonds, he said: —

"I do not suppose there can be any doubt about the transfer of the diamonds, as you are now one family."

"It would be more regular if Madame Évangélista made them over now, as Monsieur de Manerville has become responsible for the guardianship funds, and we never know who may live or die," said Solonet, who thought he saw in this circumstance fresh cause of anger in the mother-in-law against the son-in-law.

"Ah! mother," cried Paul, "it would be insulting to us all to do that, — *Summum jus*, *summa injuria*, monsieur," he said to Solonet.

"And I," said Madame Évangélista, led by the hatred now surging in her heart to see a direct insult to her in the indirect appeal of Maitre Mathias, "I will tear that contract up if you do not take them."

She left the room in one of those furious passions which long for the power to destroy everything, and which the sense of impotence drives almost to madness.

"For Heaven's sake, take them, Paul," whispered Natalie in his ear. "My mother is angry; I shall know why to-night, and I will tell you. We must pacify her."

Calmed by this first outburst, madame kept the necklace and ear-rings which she was wearing, and brought the other jewels, valued at one hundred and fifty thousand francs by Élie Magus. Accustomed to

the sight of family diamonds in all valuations of inheritance, Maître Mathias and Solonet examined these jewels in their cases and exclaimed upon their beauty.

"You will lose nothing, after all, upon the *dot*, Monsieur le comte," said Solonet, bringing the color to Paul's face.

"Yes," said Mathias, "these jewels will meet the first payment on the purchase of the new estate."

"And the costs of the contract," added Solonet.

Hatred feeds, like love, on little things; the least thing strengthens it; as one beloved can do no evil, so the person hated can do no good. Madame Évangélista assigned to hypocrisy the natural embarrassment of Paul, who was unwilling to take the jewels, and not knowing where to put the cases, longed to fling them from the window. Madame Évangélista spurred him with a glance which seemed to say, "Take your property from here."

"Dear Natalie," said Paul, "put away these jewels; they are yours; I give them to you."

Natalie locked them into the drawer of a console. At this instant the noise of the carriages in the court-yard and the murmur of voices in the reception-rooms became so loud that Natalie and her mother were forced to appear. The salons were filled in a few moments, and the fête began.

"Profit by the honeymoon to sell those diamonds," said the old notary to Paul as he went away.

While waiting for the dancing to begin, whispers went round about the marriage, and doubts were expressed as to the future of the promised couple.

"Is it finally arranged?" said one of the leading personages of the town to Madame Évangélista.

"We had so many documents to read and sign that I fear we are rather late," she replied; "but perhaps we are excusable."

"As for me, I heard nothing," said Natalie, giving her hand to her lover to open the ball.

"Both of those young persons are extravagant, and the mother is not of a kind to check them," said a dowager.

"But they have founded an entail, I am told, worth fifty thousand francs a year."

"Pooh!"

"In that I see the hand of our worthy Monsieur Mathias," said a magistrate. "If it is really true, he has done it to save the future of the family."

"Natalie is too handsome not to be horribly coquettish. After a couple of years of marriage," said one young woman, "I would n't answer for Monsieur de Manerville's happiness in his home."

"The Pink of Fashion will then need staking," said Solonet, laughing.

"Don't you think Madame Évangélista looks annoyed?" asked another.

"But, my dear, I have just been told that all she is able to keep is twenty-five thousand francs a year, and what is that to her?"

"Penury!"

"Yes, she has robbed herself for Natalie. Monsieur de Manerville has been so exacting —"

"Extremely exacting," put in Maître Solonet. "But before long he will be peer of France. The Maulin-

cours and the Vidame de Pamiers will use their influence. He belongs to the faubourg Saint-Germain."

"Oh! he is received there, and that is all," said a lady, who had tried to obtain him as a son-in-law. "Mademoiselle Évangélista, as the daughter of a merchant, will certainly not open the doors of the chapter-house of Cologne to him!"

"She is grand-niece to the Duke of Casa-Reale."

"Through the female line!"

The topic was presently exhausted. The card-players went to the tables, the young people danced, the supper was served, and the ball was not over till morning, when the first gleams of the coming day whitened the windows.

Having said adieu to Paul, who was the last to go away, Madame Évangélista went to her daughter's room; for her own had been taken by the architect to enlarge the scene of the fête. Though Natalie and her mother were overcome with sleep, they said a few words to each other as soon as they were alone.

"Tell me, mother dear, what was the matter with you?"

"My darling, I learned this evening to what lengths a mother's tenderness can go. You know nothing of business, and you are ignorant of the suspicions to which my integrity has been exposed. I have trampled my pride under foot, for your happiness and my reputation were at stake."

"Are you talking of the diamonds? Poor boy, he wept; he did not want them; I have them."

"Sleep now, my child. We will talk business when we wake — for," she added, sighing, "you and I have business now; another person has come between us."

"Ah! my dear mother, Paul will never be an obstacle to our happiness, yours and mine," murmured Natalie, as she went to sleep.

"Poor darling! she little knows that the man has ruined her."

Madame Évangélista's soul was seized at that moment with the first idea of avarice, a vice to which many become a prey as they grow aged. It came into her mind to recover in her daughter's interest the whole of the property left by her husband. She told herself that her honor demanded it. Her devotion to Natalie made her, in a moment, as shrewd and calculating as she had hitherto been careless and wasteful. She resolved to turn her capital to account, after investing a part of it in the Funds, which were then selling at eighty francs. A passion often changes the whole character in a moment; an indiscreet person becomes a diplomatist, a coward is suddenly brave. Hate made this prodigal woman a miser. Chance and luck might serve the project of vengeance, still undefined and confused, which she would now mature in her mind. She fell asleep, muttering to herself, "To-morrow!" By an unexplained phenomenon, the effects of which are familiar to all thinkers, her mind, during sleep, marshalled its ideas, enlightened them, classed them, prepared a means by which she was to rule Paul's life, and showed her a plan which she began to carry out on that very *to-morrow.*

V.

THE MARRIAGE CONTRACT—THIRD DAY.

Though the excitement of the fête had driven from Paul's mind the anxious thoughts that now and then assailed it, when he was alone with himself and in his bed they returned to torment him.

"It seems to me," he said to himself, "that without that good Mathias my mother-in-law would have tricked me. And yet, is that believable? What interest could lead her to deceive me? Are we not to join fortunes and live together? Well, well, why should I worry about it? In two days Natalie will be my wife, our money relations are plainly defined, nothing can come between us. Vogue la galère! — Nevertheless, I 'll be upon my guard. Suppose Mathias was right? Well, if he was, I 'm not obliged to marry my mother-in-law."

In this second battle of the contract Paul's future had completely changed in aspect, though he was not aware of it. Of the two persons whom he was marrying, one, the cleverest, was now his mortal enemy, and meditated already withdrawing her interests from the common fund. Incapable of observing the difference that a creole nature placed between his mother-in-law and other women, Paul was far from suspecting her craftiness. The creole nature is apart from all others;

it derives from Europe by its intellect, from the tropics by the illogical violence of its passions, from the East by the apathetic indifference with which it does, or suffers, either good or evil, equally, — a graceful nature withal, but dangerous, as a child is dangerous if not watched. Like a child, the creole woman must have her way immediately; like a child, she would burn a house to boil an egg. In her soft and easy life she takes no care upon her mind; but when impassioned, she thinks of all things. She has something of the perfidy of the negroes by whom she has been surrounded from her cradle, but she is also as naive and even, at times, as artless as they. Like them and like the children, she wishes doggedly for one thing with a growing intensity of desire, and will brood upon that idea until she hatches it. A strange assemblage of virtues and defects! which her Spanish nature had strengthened in Madame Évangélista, and over which her French experience had cast the glaze of its politeness.

This character, slumbering in married happiness for sixteen years, occupied since then with the trivialities of social life, this nature to which a first hatred had revealed its strength, awoke now like a conflagration; at the moment of the woman's life when she was losing the dearest object of her affections and needed another element for the energy that possessed her, this flame burst forth. Natalie could be but three days more beneath her influence! Madame Évangélista, vanquished at other points, had one clear day before her, the last of those that a daughter spends beside her mother. A few words, and the creole nature could

influence the lives of the two beings about to walk together through the brambled paths and the dusty high-roads of Parisian society, for Natalie believed in her mother blindly. What far-reaching power would the counsel of that creole nature have on a mind so subservient! The whole future of these lives might be determined by one single speech. No code, no human institution can prevent the crime that kills by words. There lies the weakness of social law; in that is the difference between the morals of the great world and the morals of the people: one is frank, the other hypocritical; one employs the knife, the other the venom of ideas and language; to one death, to the other impunity.

The next morning, about mid-day, Madame Évangélista was half seated, half lying on the edge of her daughter's bed. During that waking hour they caressed and played together in happy memory of their loving life; a life in which no discord had ever troubled either the harmony of their feelings, the agreement of their ideas, or the mutual choice and enjoyment of their pleasures.

"Poor little darling!" said the mother, shedding true tears, "how can I help being sorrowful when I think that after I have fulfilled your every wish during your whole life you will belong, to-morrow night, to a man you must obey?"

"Oh, my dear mother, as for obeying! —" and Natalie made a little motion of her head which expressed a graceful rebellion. "You are joking," she continued. "My father always gratified your caprices; and why not? he loved you. And I am loved, too."

"Yes, Paul has a certain love for you. But if a married woman is not careful nothing more rapidly evaporates than conjugal love. The influence a wife ought to have over her husband depends entirely on how she begins with him. You need the best advice."

"But you will be with us."

"Possibly, dear child. Last night, while the ball was going on, I reflected on the dangers of our being together. If my presence were to do you harm, if the little acts by which you ought slowly, but surely, to establish your authority as a wife should be attributed to my influence, your home would become a hell. At the first frown I saw upon your husband's brow I, proud as I am, should instantly leave his house. If I were driven to leave it, better, I think, not to enter it. I should never forgive your husband if he caused trouble between us. Whereas, when you have once become the mistress, when your husband is to you what your father was to me, that danger is no longer to be feared. Though this wise policy will cost your young and tender heart a pang, your happiness demands that you become the absolute sovereign of your home."

"Then why, mamma, did you say just now I must obey him."

"My dear little daughter, in order that a wife may rule, she must always seem to do what her husband wishes. If you were not told this you might by some impulsive opposition destroy your future. Paul is a weak young man; he might allow a friend to rule him; he might even fall under the dominion of some woman who would make you feel her influence. Pre-

vent such disasters by making yourself from the very start his ruler. Is it not better that he be governed by you than by others?"

"Yes, certainly," said Natalie. "I should think only of his happiness."

"And it is my privilege, darling, to think only of yours, and to wish not to leave you at so crucial a moment without a compass in the midst of the reefs through which you must steer."

"But, dearest mother, are we not strong enough, you and I, to stay together beside him, without having to fear those frowns you seem to dread. Paul loves you, mamma."

"Oh! oh! He fears me far more than he loves me. Observe him carefully to-day when I tell him that I shall let you go to Paris without me, and you will see on his face, no matter what pains he takes to conceal it, his inward joy."

"Why should he feel so?"

"Why? Dear child! I am like Saint-Jean Bouche-d'Or. I will tell that to himself, and before you."

"But suppose I marry on condition that you do not leave me?" urged Natalie.

"Our separation is necessary," replied her mother. "Several considerations have greatly changed my future. I am now poor. You will lead a brilliant life in Paris, and I could not live with you suitably without spending the little that remains to me. Whereas, if I go to Lanstrac, I can take care of your property there and restore my fortune by economy."

"You, mamma! *you* practise economy!" cried Natalie, laughing. "Don't begin to be a grand-

mother yet. What! do you mean to leave me for such reasons as those? Dear mother, Paul may seem to you a trifle stupid, but he is not one atom selfish or grasping."

"Ah!" replied Madame Évangélista, in a tone of voice big with suggestions which made the girl's heart throb, "those discussions about the contract have made me distrustful. I have my doubts about him — But don't be troubled, dear child," she added, taking her daughter by the neck and kissing her. "I will not leave you long alone. Whenever my return can take place without making difficulty between you, whenever Paul can rightly judge me, we will begin once more our happy little life, our evening confidences — "

"Oh! mother, how can you think of living without your Natalie? "

"Because, dear angel, I shall live for her. My mother's heart will be satisfied in the thought that I contribute, as I ought, to your future happiness."

"But my dear, adorable mother, must I be alone with Paul, here, now, all at once? What will become of me? what will happen? what must I do? what must I not do? "

"Poor child! do you think that I would utterly abandon you to your first battle? We will write to each other three times a week like lovers. We shall thus be close to each other's heart incessantly. Nothing can happen to you that I shall not know, and I can save you from all misfortune. Besides, it would be too ridiculous if I never went to see you; it would seem to show dislike or disrespect to your husband;

I will always spend a month or two every year with you in Paris."

"Alone, already alone, and with him!" cried Natalie in terror, interrupting her mother.

"But you wish to be his wife?"

"Yes, I wish it. But tell me how I should behave, — you, who did what you pleased with my father. You know the way; I 'll obey you blindly."

Madame Évangélista kissed her daughter's forehead. She had willed and awaited this request.

"Child, my counsels must adapt themselves to circumstances. All men are not alike. The lion and the frog are not more unlike than one man compared with another, — morally, I mean. Do I know to-day what will happen to you to-morrow? No; therefore I can only give you general advice upon the whole tenor of your conduct."

"Dear mother, tell me, quick, all that you know yourself."

"In the first place, my dear child, the cause of the failure of married women who desire to keep their husbands' hearts — and" she said, making a parenthesis, "to keep their hearts and rule them is one and the same thing — Well, the principle cause of conjugal disunion is to be found in perpetual intercourse, which never existed in the olden time, but which has been introduced into this country of late years with the mania for family. Since the Revolution the manners and customs of the bourgeoisie have invaded the homes of aristocracy. This misfortune is due to one of their writers, Rousseau, an infamous heretic, whose ideas were all anti-social and who pre-

tended, I don't know how, to justify the most senseless things. He declared that all women had the same rights and the same faculties; that living in a state of society we ought, nevertheless, to obey nature — as if the wife of a Spanish grandee, as if you or I had anything in common with the women of the people! Since then, well-bred women have suckled their children, have educated their daughters, and stayed in their own homes. Life has become so involved that happiness is almost impossible, — for a perfect harmony between natures such as that which has made you and me live as two friends is an exception. Perpetual contact is as dangerous for parents and children as it is for husband and wife. There are few souls in which love survives this fatal omnipresence. Therefore, I say, erect between yourself and Paul the barriers of society; go to balls and operas; go out in the morning, dine out in the evenings, pay visits constantly, and grant but little of your time to your husband. By this means you will always keep your value to him. When two beings bound together for life have nothing to live upon but sentiment, its resources are soon exhausted, indifference, satiety, and disgust succeed. When sentiment has withered what will become of you? Remember, affection once extinguished can lead to nothing but indifference or contempt. Be ever young and ever new to him. He may weary you, — that often happens, — but you must never weary him. The faculty of being bored without showing it is a condition of all species of power. You cannot diversify happiness by the cares of property or the occupations of a family. If you do not

make your husband share your social interests, if you do not keep him amused you will fall into a dismal apathy. Then begins the *spleen* of love. But a man will always love the woman who amuses him and keeps him happy. To give happiness and to receive it are two lines of feminine conduct which are separated by a gulf."

"Dear mother, I am listening to you, but I don't understand one word you say."

"If you love Paul to the extent of doing all he asks of you, if you make your happiness depend on him, all is over with your future life; you will never be mistress of your home, and the best precepts in the world will do you no good."

"That is plainer; but I see the rule without knowing how to apply it," said Natalie, laughing. "I have the theory; the practice will come."

"My poor Ninie," replied the mother, who dropped an honest tear at the thought of her daughter's marriage, things will happen to teach it to you — And," she continued, after a pause, during which the mother and daughter held each other closely embraced in the truest sympathy, "remember this, my Natalie: we all have our destiny as women, just as men have their vocation as men. A woman is born to be a woman of the world and a charming hostess, as a man is born to be a general or a poet. Your vocation is to please. Your education has formed you for society. In these days women should be educated for the salon as they once were for the gynœcium. You were not born to be the mother of a family or the steward of a household. If you have children, I hope they will not come

to spoil your figure on the morrow of your marriage; nothing is so bourgeois as to have a child at once. If you have them two or three years after your marriage, well and good; governesses and tutors will bring them up. *You* are to be the lady, the great lady, who represents the luxury and the pleasure of the house. But remember one thing — let your superiority be visible in those things only which flatter a man's self-love; hide the superiority you must also acquire over him in great things.

"But you frighten me, mamma," cried Natalie. "How can I remember all these precepts? How shall I ever manage, I, such a child, and so heedless, to reflect and calculate before I act?"

"But, my dear little girl, I am telling you to-day that which you must surely learn later, buying your experience by fatal faults and errors of conduct which will cause you bitter regrets and embarrass your whole life."

"But how must I begin?" asked Natalie, artlessly.

"Instinct will guide you," replied her mother. "At this moment Paul desires you more than he loves you; for love born of desires is a hope; the love that succeeds their satisfaction is the reality. There, my dear, is the question; there lies your power. What woman is not loved before marriage? Be so on the morrow and you will remain so always. Paul is a weak man who is easily trained to habit. If he yields to you once he will yield always. A woman ardently desired can ask all things; do not commit the folly of many women who do not see the importance of the first hours of their sway,— that of wasting your power

on trifles, on silly things with no result. Use the empire your husband's first emotions give you to accustom him to obedience. And when you make him yield, choose that it be on some unreasonable point, so as to test the measure of your power by the measure of his concession. What victory would there be in making him agree to a reasonable thing? Would that be obeying you? We must always, as the Castilian proverb says, take the bull by the horns; when a bull has once seen the inutility of his defence and of his strength he is beaten. When your husband does a foolish thing for you, you can govern him."

"Why so?"

"Because, my child, marriage lasts a lifetime, and a husband is not a man like other men. Therefore, never commit the folly of giving yourself into his power in anything. Keep up a constant reserve in your speech and in your actions. You may even be cold to him without danger, for you can modify coldness at will. Besides, nothing is more easy to maintain than our dignity. The words, "It is not becoming in your wife to do thus and so," is a great talisman. The life of a woman lies in the words, "I will not." They are the final argument. Feminine power is in them, and therefore they should only be used on real occasions. But they constitute a means of governing far beyond that of argument or discussion. I, my dear child, reigned over your father by his faith in me. If your husband believes in you, you can do all things with him. To inspire that belief you must make him think that you understand him. Do not suppose that that is an easy thing to do. A woman can always make a

man think that he is loved, but to make him admit that he is understood is far more difficult. I am bound to tell you all now, my child, for to-morrow life with its complications, life with two wills which *must* be made one, begins for you. Bear in mind, at all moments, that difficulty. The only means of harmonizing your two wills is to arrange from the first that there shall be but one; and that will must be yours. Many persons declare that a wife creates her own unhappiness by changing sides in this way; but, my dear, she can only become the mistress by controlling events instead of bearing them; and that advantage compensates for any difficulty."

Natalie kissed her mother's hands with tears of gratitude. Like all women in whom mental emotion is never warmed by physical emotion, she suddenly comprehended the bearings of this feminine policy; but, like a spoiled child that never admits the force of reason and returns obstinately to its one desire, she came back to the charge with one of those personal arguments which the logic of a child suggests: —

"Dear mamma," she said, "it is only a few days since you were talking of Paul's advancement, and saying that you alone could promote it; why, then, do you suddenly turn round and abandon us to ourselves?"

"I did not then know the extent of my obligations nor the amount of my debts," replied the mother, who would not suffer her real motive to be seen. "Besides, a year or two hence I can take up that matter again. Come, let us dress; Paul will be here soon. Be as sweet and caressing as you were, — you know? — that

night when we first discussed this fatal contract; for to-day we must save the last fragments of our fortune, and I must win for you a thing to which I am superstitiously attached."

"What is it?"

"The *Discreto*."

Paul arrived about four o'clock. Though he endeavored to meet his mother-in-law with a gracious look upon his face, Madame Évangélista saw traces of the clouds which the counsels of the night and the reflections of the morning had brought there.

"Mathias has told him!" she thought, resolving to defeat the old notary's action. "My dear son," she said, "you left your diamonds in the drawer of the console, and I frankly confess that I would rather not see again the things that threatened to bring a cloud between us. Besides, as Monsieur Mathias said, they ought to be sold at once to meet the first payment on the estates you have purchased."

"They are not mine," he said. "I have given them to Natalie, and when you see them upon her you will forget the pain they caused you."

Madame Évangélista took his hand and pressed it cordially, with a tear of emotion.

"Listen to me, my dear children," she said, looking from Paul to Natalie; "since you really feel thus, I have a proposition to make to both of you. I find myself obliged to sell my pearl necklace and my earrings. Yes, Paul, it is necessary; I do not choose to put a penny of my fortune into an annuity; I know what I owe to you. Well, I admit a weakness; to sell the *Discreto* seems to me a disaster. To sell a

diamond which bears the name of Philip the Second and once adorned his royal hand, an historic stone which the Duke of Alba touched for ten years in the hilt of his sword — no, no, I cannot! Élie Magus estimates my necklace and ear-rings at a hundred and some odd thousand francs without the clasps. Will you exchange the other jewels I made over to you for these? you will gain by the transaction, but what of that? I am not selfish. Instead of those mere fancy jewels, Paul, your wife will have fine diamonds which she can really enjoy. Is n't it better that I should sell those ornaments which will surely go out of fashion, and that you should keep in the family these priceless stones?"

"But, my dear mother, consider yourself," said Paul.

"I," replied Madame Évangélista, "I want such things no longer. Yes, Paul, I am going to be your bailiff at Lanstrac. It would be folly in me to go to Paris at the moment when I ought to be here to liquidate my property and settle my affairs. I shall grow miserly for my grandchildren."

"Dear mother," said Paul, much moved, "ought I to accept this exchange without paying you the difference?"

"Good heavens! are you not, both of you, my dearest interests? Do you suppose I shall not find happiness in thinking, as I sit in my chimney-corner, 'Natalie is dazzling to-night at the Duchesse de Berry's ball'? When she sees my diamond at her throat and my ear-rings in her ears she will have one of those little enjoyments of vanity which contribute

so much to a woman's happiness and make her so gay and fascinating. Nothing saddens a woman more than to have her vanity repressed; I have never seen an ill-dressed woman who was amiable or good-humored."

"Heavens! what was Mathias thinking about?" thought Paul. "Well, then, mamma," he said, in a low voice, "I accept."

"But I am confounded!" said Natalie.

At this moment Solonet arrived to announce the good news that he had found among the speculators of Bordeaux two contractors who were much attracted by the house, the gardens of which could be covered with dwellings.

"They offer two hundred and fifty thousand francs," he said; "but if you consent to the sale, I can make them give you three hundred thousand. There are three acres of land in the garden."

"My husband paid two hundred thousand for the place, therefore I consent," she replied. "But you must reserve the furniture and the mirrors."

"Ah!" said Solonet, "you are beginning to understand business."

"Alas! I must," she said, sighing.

"I am told that a great many persons are coming to your midnight service," said Solonet, perceiving that his presence was inopportune, and preparing to go.

Madame Évangélista accompanied him to the door of the last salon, and there she said, in a low voice: —

"I now have personal property to the amount of two hundred and fifty thousand francs; if I can get two

hundred thousand for my share on the sale of the house it will make a handsome capital, which I shall want to invest to the very best advantage. I count on you for that. I shall probably live at Lanstrac."

The young notary kissed his client's hand with a gesture of gratitude; for the widow's tone of voice made Solonet fancy that this alliance, really made from self-interest only, might extend a little farther.

"You can count on me," he replied. "I can find you investments in merchandise on which you will risk nothing and make very considerable profits."

"Adieu until to-morrow," she said; "you are to be our witness, you know, with Monsieur le Marquis de Gyas."

"My dear mother," said Paul, when she returned to them, "why do you refuse to come to Paris? Natalie is provoked with me, as if I were the cause of your decision."

"I have thought it all over, my children, and I am sure that I should hamper you. You would feel obliged to make me a third in all you did, and young people have ideas of their own which I might, unintentionally, thwart. Go to Paris. I do not wish to exercise over the Comtesse de Manerville the gentle authority I have held over Natalie. I desire to leave her wholly to you. Don't you see, Paul, that there are habits and ways between us which must be broken up? My influence ought to yield to yours. I want you to love me, and to believe that I have your interests more at heart than you think for. Young husbands are, sooner or later, jealous of the love of a wife for her mother. Perhaps they are right. When

you are thoroughly united, when love has blended your two souls into one, then, my dear son, you will not fear an opposing influence if I live in your house. I know the world, and men, and things; I have seen the peace of many a home destroyed by the blind love of mothers who made themselves in the end as intolerable to their daughters as to their sons-in-law. The affection of old people is often exacting and querulous. Perhaps I could not efface myself as I should. I have the weakness to think myself still handsome; I have flatterers who declare that I am still agreeable; I should have, I fear, certain pretensions which might interfere with your lives. Let me, therefore, make one more sacrifice for your happiness. I have given you my fortune, and now I desire to resign to you my last vanities as a woman. Your notary Mathias is getting old. He cannot look after your estates as I will. I will be your bailiff; I will create for myself those natural occupations which are the pleasures of old age. Later, if necessary, I will come to you in Paris, and second you in your projects of ambition. Come, Paul, be frank; my proposal suits you, does it not?"

Paul would not admit it, but he was at heart delighted to get his liberty. The suspicions which Mathias had put into his mind respecting his mother-in-law were, however, dissipated by this conversation, which Madame Évangélista carried on still longer in the same tone.

"My mother was right," thought Natalie, who had watched Paul's countenance. "He *is* glad to know that I am separated from her — why?"

That "why?" was the first note of a rising distrust; did it prove the power of those maternal instructions?

There are certain characters which on the faith of a single proof believe in friendship. To persons thus constituted the north wind drives away the clouds as rapidly as the south wind brings them; they stop at effects and never hark back to causes. Paul had one of those essentially confiding natures, without ill-feelings, but also without foresight. His weakness proceeded far more from his kindness, his belief in goodness, than from actual debility of soul.

Natalie was sad and thoughtful, for she knew not what to do without her mother. Paul, with that self-confident conceit which comes of love, smiled to himself at her sadness, thinking how soon the pleasures of marriage and the excitements of Paris would drive it away. Madame Évangélista saw this confidence with much satisfaction. She had already taken two great steps. Her daughter possessed the diamonds which had cost Paul two hundred thousand francs; and she had gained her point of leaving these two children to themselves with no other guide than their illogical love. Her revenge was thus preparing, unknown to her daughter, who would, sooner or later, become its accomplice. Did Natalie love Paul? That was a question still undecided, the answer to which might modify her projects, for she loved her daughter too sincerely not to respect her happiness. Paul's future, therefore, still depended on himself. If he could make his wife love him, he was saved.

The next day, at midnight, after an evening spent together, with the addition of the four witnesses, to

whom Madame Évangélista gave the formal dinner which follows the legal marriage, the bridal pair, accompanied by their friends, heard mass by torch-light, in presence of a crowd of inquisitive persons. A marriage celebrated at night always suggests to the mind an unpleasant omen. Light is the symbol of life and pleasure, the forecasts of which are lacking to a midnight wedding. Ask the intrepid soul why it shivers; why the chill of those black arches enervates it; why the sound of steps startles it; why it notices the cry of bats and the hoot of owls. Though there is absolutely no reason to tremble, all present do tremble, and the darkness, emblem of death, saddens them. Natalie, parted from her mother, wept. The girl was now a prey to those doubts which grasp the heart as it enters a new career in which, despite all assurances of happiness, a thousand pitfalls await the steps of a young wife. She was cold and wanted a mantle. The air and manner of Madame Évangélista and that of the bridal pair excited some comment among the elegant crowd which surrounded the altar.

"Solonet tells me that the bride and bridegroom leave for Paris to-morrow morning, all alone."

"Madame Évangélista was to live with them, I thought."

"Count Paul has got rid of her already."

"What a mistake!" said the Marquise de Gyas. "To shut the door on the mother of his wife is to open it to a lover. Does n't he know what a mother is?"

"He has been very hard on Madame Évangélista; the poor woman has had to sell her house and her diamonds, and is going to live at Lanstrac."

"Natalie looks very sad."

"Would you like to be made to take a journey the day after your marriage?"

"It is very awkward."

"I am glad I came here to-night," said a lady. "I am now convinced of the necessity of the pomps of marriage and of wedding fêtes; a scene like this is very bare and sad. If I may say what I think," she added, in a whisper to her neighbor, "this marriage seems to me indecent."

Madame Évangélista took Natalie in her carriage and accompanied her, alone, to Paul's house.

"Well, mother, it is done!"

"Remember, my dear child, my last advice, and you will be a happy woman. Be his wife, and not his mistress."

When Natalie had retired, the mother played the little comedy of flinging herself with tears into the arms of her son-in-law. It was the only provincial thing that Madame Évangélista allowed herself, but she had her reasons for it. Amid tears and speeches, apparently half wild and despairing, she obtained of Paul those concessions which all husbands make.

The next day she put the married pair into their carriage, and accompanied them to the ferry, by which the road to Paris crosses the Gironde. With a look and a word Natalie enabled her mother to see that if Paul had won the trick in the game of the contract, her revenge was beginning. Natalie was already reducing her husband to perfect obedience.

VI.

CONCLUSION.

Five years later, on an afternoon in the month of November, Comte Paul de Manerville, wrapped in a cloak, was entering, with a bowed head and a mysterious manner, the house of his old friend Monsieur Mathias at Bordeaux.

Too old to continue in business, the worthy notary had sold his practice and was ending his days peacefully in a quiet house to which he had retired. An urgent affair had obliged him to be absent at the moment of his guest's arrival, but his housekeeper, warned of Paul's coming, took him to the room of the late Madame Mathias, who had been dead a year. Fatigued by a rapid journey, Paul slept till evening. When the old man reached home he went up to his client's room, and watched him sleeping, as a mother watches her child. Josette, the old housekeeper, followed her master and stood before the bed, her hands on her hips.

"It is a year to-day, Josette, since I received my dear wife's last sigh; I little knew then that I should stand here again to see the count half dead."

"Poor man! he moans in his sleep," said Josette.

"*Sac à papier!*" cried the old notary, an innocent oath which was a sign with him of the despair on a

man of business before insurmountable difficulties. "At any rate," he thought, "I have saved the title to the Lanstrac estate for him, and that of Ausac, Saint-Froult, and his house, though the usufruct has gone." Mathias counted on his fingers. "Five years! Just five years this month, since his old aunt, now dead, that excellent Madame de Maulincour, asked for the hand of that little crocodile of a woman, who has finally ruined him — as I expected."

And the gouty old gentleman, leaning on his cane, went to walk in the little garden till his guest should awake. At nine o'clock supper was served, for Mathias took supper. The old man was not a little astonished, when Paul joined him, to see that his old client's brow was calm and his face serene, though noticeably changed. If at the age of thirty-three the Comte de Manerville seemed to be a man of forty, that change in his appearance was due solely to mental shocks; physically, he was well. He clasped the old man's hand affectionately, and forced him not to rise, saying: —

"Dear, kind Maître Mathias, you, too, have had your troubles."

"Mine were natural troubles, Monsieur le comte; but yours — "

"We will talk of that presently, while we sup."

"If I had not a son in the magistracy, and a daughter married," said the good old man, "you would have found in old Mathias, believe me, Monsieur le comte, something better than mere hospitality. Why have you come to Bordeaux at the very moment when posters are on all the walls of the seizure of your farms at

Grassol and Guadet, the vineyard of Belle-Rose and the family mansion? I cannot tell you the grief I feel at the sight of those placards, — I, who for forty years nursed that property as if it belonged to me; I, who bought it for your mother when I was only third clerk to Monsieur Chesnau, my predecessor, and wrote the deeds myself in my best round hand; I, who have those titles now in my successor's office; I, who have known you since you were so high;" and the old man stooped to put his hand near the ground. "Ah! a man must have been a notary for forty-one years and a half to know the sort of grief I feel to see my name exposed before the face of Israel in those announcements of the seizure and sale of the property. When I pass through the streets and see men reading those horrible yellow posters, I am ashamed, as if my own honor and ruin were concerned. Some fools will stand there and read them aloud expressly to draw other fools about them — and what imbecile remarks they make! As if a man were not master of his own property! Your father ran through two fortunes before he made the one he left you; and you would n't be a Manerville if you did n't do likewise. Besides, seizures of real estate have a whole section of the Code to themselves; they are expected and provided for; you are in a position recognized by the law. — If I were not an old man with white hair, I would thrash those fools I hear reading aloud in the streets such an abomination as this," added the worthy notary, taking up a paper: " 'At the request of Dame Natalie Évangélista, wife of Paul-François-Joseph, Comte de Manerville, separated from him as to

worldly goods and chattels by the Lower court of the department of the Seine — ' "

"Yes, and now separated in body," said Paul.

"Ah!" exclaimed the old man.

"Oh! against my wife's will," added the count, hastily. "I was forced to deceive her; she did not know that I was leaving her."

"You have left her? "

"My passage is taken; I sail for Calcutta on the 'Belle-Amélie.' "

"Two days hence!" cried the notary. "Then, Monsieur le comte, we shall never meet again."

"You are only seventy-three, my dear Mathias, and you have the gout, the brevet of old age. When I return I shall find you still afoot. Your good head and heart will be as sound as ever, and you will help me to reconstruct what is now a shaken edifice. I intend to make a noble fortune in seven years. I shall be only forty on my return. All is still possible at that age."

"You? " said Mathias, with a gesture of amazement, — you, Monsieur le comte, to undertake commerce! How can you even think of it? "

"I am no longer Monsieur le comte, dear Mathias. My passage is taken under the name of Camille, one of my mother's baptismal names. I have acquirements which will enable me to make my fortune otherwise than in business. Commerce, at any rate, will be only my final chance. I start with a sum in hand sufficient for the redemption of my future on a large scale."

"Where is that money? "

"A friend is to send it to me."

The old man dropped his fork as he heard the word "friend," not in surprise, not scoffingly, but in grief; his look and manner expressed the pain he felt in finding Paul under the influence of a deceitful illusion; his practised eye fathomed a gulf where the count saw nothing but solid ground.

"I have been fifty years in the notariat," he said, "and I never yet knew a ruined man whose friends would lend him money."

"You don't know de Marsay. I am certain that he has sold out some of his investments already, and to-morrow you will receive from him a bill of exchange for one hundred and fifty thousand francs."

"I hope I may. If that be so, cannot your friend settle your difficulties here? You could live quietly at Lanstrac for five or six years on your wife's income, and so recover yourself."

"No assignment or economy on my part could pay off fifteen hundred thousand francs of debt, in which my wife is involved to the amount of five hundred and fifty thousand."

"You cannot mean to say that in four years you have incurred a million and a half of debt?"

"Nothing is more certain, Mathias. Did I not give those diamonds to my wife? Did I not spend the hundred and fifty thousand I received from the sale of Madame Évangélista's house, in the arrangement of my house in Paris? Was I not forced to use other money for the first payments on that property demanded by the marriage contract? I was even forced to sell out Natalie's forty thousand a year in

the Funds to complete the purchase of Auzac and Saint-Froult. We sold at eighty-seven, therefore I became in debt for over two hundred thousand francs within a month after my marriage. That left us only sixty-seven thousand francs a year; but we spent fully three times as much every year. Add all that up, together with rates of interest to usurers, and you will soon find a million."

"Br-r-r!" exclaimed the old notary. "Go on. What next?"

"Well, I wanted, in the first place, to complete for my wife that set of jewels of which she had the pearl necklace clasped by the family diamond, the *Discreto*, and her mother's ear-rings. I paid a hundred thousand francs for a coronet of diamond wheat-ears. There 's eleven hundred thousand. And now I find I owe the fortune of my wife, which amounts to three hundred and sixty-six thousand francs of her *dot*."

"But," said Mathias, "if Madame la comtesse had given up her diamonds and you had pledged your income you could have pacified your creditors and have paid them off in time."

"When a man is down, Mathias, when his property is covered with mortgages, when his wife's claims take precedence of his creditors', and when that man has notes out for a hundred thousand francs which he must pay (and I hope I can do so out of the increased value of my property here), what you propose is not possible."

"This is dreadful!" cried Mathias; "would you sell Belle-Rose with the vintage of 1825 still in the cellars?"

"I cannot help myself."

"Belle-Rose is worth six hundred thousand francs."

"Natalie will buy it in; I have advised her to do so."

"I might push the price to seven hundred thousand, and the farms are worth a hundred thousand each."

"Then if the house in Bordeaux can be sold for two hundred thousand — "

"Solonet will give more than that; he wants it. He is retiring with a handsome property made by gambling on the Funds. He has sold his practice for three hundred thousand francs, and marries a mulatto woman. God knows how she got her money, but they say it amounts to millions. A notary gambling in stocks! a notary marrying a black woman! What an age! It is said that he speculates for your mother-in-law with her funds."

"She has greatly improved Lanstrac and taken great pains with its cultivation. She has amply repaid me for the use of it."

"I should n't have thought her capable of that."

"She is so kind and so devoted; she has always paid Natalie's debts during the three months she spent with us every year in Paris."

"She could well afford to do so, for she gets her living out of Lanstrac," said Mathias. "She! grown economical! what a miracle! I am told she has just bought the domain of Grainrouge between Lanstrac and Grassol; so that if the Lanstrac avenue were extended to the high-road, you would drive four and a half miles through your own property to reach the house. She paid one hundred thousand francs down for Grainrouge."

"She is as handsome as ever," said Paul; "country life preserves her freshness; I don't mean to go to Lanstrac and bid her good-bye; her heart would bleed for me too much."

"You would go in vain; she is now in Paris. She probably arrived there as you left."

"No doubt she had heard of the sale of my property and came to help me. I have no complaint to make of life, Mathias. I am truly loved, — as much as any man ever could be here below; beloved by two women who outdo each other in devotion; they are even jealous of each other; the daughter blames the mother for loving me too much, and the mother reproaches the daughter for what she calls her dissipations. I may say that this great affection has been my ruin. How could I fail to satisfy even the slightest caprice of a loving wife? Impossible to restrain myself! Neither could I accept any sacrifice on her part. We might certainly, as you say, live at Lanstrac, save my income, and part with her diamonds, but I would rather go to India and work for a fortune than tear my Natalie from the life she enjoys. So it was I who proposed the separation as to property. Women are angels who ought not to be mixed up in the sordid interests of life."

Old Mathias listened in doubt and amazement.

"You have no children, I think," he said.

"Fortunately, none," replied Paul.

"That is not my idea of marriage," remarked the old notary, naively. "A wife ought, in my opinion, to share the good and evil fortunes of her husband. I have heard that young married people who love like

lovers, do not want children? Is pleasure the only object of marriage? I say that object should be the joys of family. Moreover, in this case — I am afraid you will think me too much of notary — your marriage contract made it incumbent upon you to have a son. Yes, Monsieur le comte, you ought to have had at once a male heir to consolidate that entail. Why not? Mademoiselle Évangélista was strong and healthy; she had nothing to fear in maternity. You will tell me, perhaps, that these are the old-fashioned notions of our ancestors. But in those noble families, Monsieur le comte, the legitimate wife thought it her duty to bear children and bring them up nobly; as the Duchesse de Sully, the wife of the great Sully, said, a wife is not an instrument of pleasure, but the honor and virtue of her household."

"You don't know women, my good Mathias," said Paul. "In order to be happy we must love them as they want to be loved. Is n't there something brutal in at once depriving a wife of her charms, and spoiling her beauty before she has begun to enjoy it?"

"If you had had children your wife would not have dissipated your fortune; she would have stayed at home and looked after them."

"If you were right, dear friend," said Paul, frowning, "I should be still more unhappy than I am. Do not aggravate my sufferings by preaching to me after my fall. Let me go, without the pang of looking backward to mistakes."

The next day Mathias received a bill of exchange for one hundred and fifty thousand francs from de Marsay.

"You see," said Paul, "he does not write a word to me. He begins by obliging me. Henri's nature is the most imperfectly perfect, the most illegally beautiful that I know. If you knew with what superiority that man, still young, can rise above sentiments, above self-interests, and judge them, you would be astonished, as I am, to find how much heart he has."

Mathias tried to battle with Paul's determination, but he found it irrevocable, and it was justified by so many cogent reasons that the old man finally ceased his endeavors to retain his client.

It is seldom that vessels sail promptly at the time appointed, but on this occasion, by a fateful circumstance for Paul, the wind was fair and the "Belle-Amélie" sailed on the morrow, as expected. The quay was lined with relations, and friends, and idle persons. Among them were several who had formerly known Manerville. His disaster, posted on the walls of the town, made him as celebrated as he was in the days of his wealth and fashion. Curiosity was aroused; every one had their word to say about him. Old Mathias accompanied his client to the quay, and his sufferings were sore as he caught a few words of those remarks: —

"Who could recognize in that man you see over there, near old Mathias, the dandy who was called the Pink of Fashion five years ago, and made, as they say, 'fair weather and foul' in Bordeaux."

"What! that stout, short man in the alpaca overcoat, who looks like a groom, — is that Comte Paul de Manerville?"

"Yes, my dear, the same who married Mademoiselle

Évangélista. Here he is, ruined, without a penny to his name, going out to India to look for luck."

"But how did he ruin himself? he was very rich."

"Oh! Paris, women, play, luxury, gambling at the Bourse —"

"Besides," said another, "Manerville always was a poor creature; no mind, soft as papier-mâché, he'd let anybody shear the wool from his back; incapable of anything, no matter what. He was born to be ruined.

Paul wrung the hand of the old man and went on board. Mathias stood upon the pier, looking at his client, who leaned against the shrouds, defying the crowd before him with a glance of contempt. At the moment when the sailors began to weigh anchor, Paul noticed that Mathias was making signals to him with his handkerchief. The old housekeeper had hurried to her master, who seemed to be excited by some sudden event. Paul asked the captain to wait a moment, and send a boat to the pier, which was done. Too feeble himself to go aboard, Mathias gave two letters to a sailor in the boat.

"My friend," he said, "this packet" (showing one of the two letters) "is important; it has just arrived by a courier from Paris in thirty-five hours. State this to Monsieur le comte; don't neglect to do so; it may change his plans."

"Would he come ashore?"

"Possibly, my friend," said the notary, imprudently.

The sailor is, in all lands, a being of a race apart, holding all land-folk in contempt. This one happened

to be a bas-Breton, who saw but one thing in Maître Mathias's request.

"Come ashore, indeed!" he thought, as he rowed. "Make the captain lose a passenger! If one listened to those walruses we 'd have nothing to do but embark and disembark 'em. He 's afraid that son of his will catch cold."

The sailor gave Paul the letter and said not a word of the message. Recognizing the handwriting of his wife and de Marsay, Paul supposed that he knew what they both would urge upon him. Anxious not to be influenced by offers which he believed their devotion to his welfare would inspire, he put the letters in his pocket unread, with apparent indifference.

Absorbed in the sad thoughts which assail the strongest man under such circumstances, Paul gave way to his grief as he waved his hand to his old friend, and bade farewell to France, watching the steeples of Bordeaux as they fled out of sight. He seated himself on a coil of rope. Night overtook him still lost in thought. With the semi-darkness of the dying day came doubts; he cast an anxious eye into the future. Sounding it, and finding there uncertainty and danger, he asked his soul if courage would fail him. A vague dread seized his mind as he thought of Natalie left wholly to herself; he repented the step he had taken; he regretted Paris and his life there. Suddenly sea-sickness overcame him. Every one knows the effect of that disorder. The most horrible of its sufferings devoid of danger is a complete dissolution of the will. An inexplicable distress relaxes to their very centre the cords of vitality; the soul no longer

performs its functions; the sufferer becomes indifferent to everything; the mother forgets her child, the lover his mistress, the strongest man lies prone, like an inert mass. Paul was carried to his cabin, where he stayed three days, lying on his back, gorged with grog by the sailors, or vomiting; thinking of nothing, and sleeping much. Then he revived into a species of convalescence, and returned by degrees to his ordinary condition. The first morning after he felt better he went on deck and paced the poop, breathing in the salt breezes of another atmosphere. Putting his hands into his pockets he felt the letters. At once he opened them, beginning with that of his wife.

In order that the letter of the Comtesse de Manerville be fully understood, it is necessary to give the one which Paul had written to her on the day that he left Paris.

From Paul de Manerville to his wife:

My beloved, — When you read this letter I shall be far away from you; perhaps already on the vessel which is to take me to India, where I am going to repair my shattered fortune.

I have not found courage to tell you of my departure. I have deceived you; but it was best to do so. You would only have been uselessly distressed; you would have wished to sacrifice your fortune, and that I could not have suffered. Dear Natalie, feel no remorse; I have no regrets. When I return with millions I shall imitate your father and lay them at your feet, as he laid his at the feet of your mother, saying to you: "All I have is yours."

I love you madly, Natalie; I say this without fear that the avowal will lead you to strain a power which none but weak men fear; yours has been boundless from the day I knew you first. My love is the only accomplice in my disaster. I have felt, as my ruin progressed, the delirious joys of a gambler; as the money diminished, so my enjoyment grew. Each fragment of my fortune turned into some little pleasure for you gave me untold happiness. I could have wished that you had more caprices that I might gratify them all. I knew I was marching to a precipice, but I went on crowned with joys of which a common heart knows nothing. I have acted like those lovers who take refuge in a cottage on the shores of some lake for a year or two, resolved to kill themselves at last; dying thus in all the glory of their illusions and their love. I have always thought such persons infinitely sensible.

You have known nothing of my pleasures or my sacrifices. The greatest joy of all was to hide from the one beloved the cost of her desires. I can reveal these secrets to you now, for when you hold this paper, heavy with love, I shall be far away. Though I lose the treasures of your gratitude, I do not suffer that contraction of the heart which would disable me if I spoke to you of these matters. Besides, my own beloved, is there not a tender calculation in thus revealing to you the history of the past? Does it not extend our love into the future? — But we need no such supports! We love each other with a love to which proof is needless, — a love which takes no note of time or distance, but lives of itself alone.

Ah! Natalie, I have just looked at you asleep, trustful, restful as a little child, your hand stretched toward me. I left a tear upon the pillow which has known our precious joys. I leave you without fear, on the faith of that attitude; I go to win the future of our love by bringing home to you a fortune large enough to gratify your every taste, and let no shadow of anxiety disturb our joys. Neither you nor I can do without enjoyments in the life we live. To me belongs the task of providing the necessary fortune. I am a man; and I have courage.

Perhaps you might seek to follow me. For that reason I conceal from you the name of the vessel, the port from which I sail, and the day of sailing. After I am gone, when too late to follow me, a friend will tell you all.

Natalie! my affection is boundless. I love you as a mother loves her child, as a lover loves his mistress, with absolute unselfishness. To me the toil, to you the pleasures; to me all sufferings, to you all happiness. Amuse yourself; continue your habits of luxury; go to theatres and operas, enjoy society and balls; I leave you free for all things. Dear angel, when you return to this nest where for five years we have tasted the fruits which love has ripened think of your friend; think for a moment of me, and rest upon my heart.

That is all I ask of you. For myself, dear eternal thought of mine! whether under burning skies, toiling for both of us, I face obstacles to vanquish, or whether, weary with the struggle, I rest my mind on hopes of a return, I shall think of you alone; of you

who are my life, — my blessed life! Yes, I shall live in you. I shall tell myself daily that you have no troubles, no cares; that you are happy. As in our natural lives of day and night, of sleeping and waking, I shall have sunny days in Paris, and nights of toil in India, — a painful dream, a joyful reality; and I shall live so utterly in that reality that my actual life will pass as a dream. I shall have memories! I shall recall, line by line, strophe by strophe, our glorious five years' poem. I shall remember the days of your pleasure in some new dress or some adornment which made you to my eyes a fresh delight. Yes, dear angel, I go like a man vowed to some great emprize, the guerdon of which, if success attend him, is the recovery of his beautiful mistress. Oh! my precious love, my Natalie, keep me as a religion in your heart. Be the child that I have just seen asleep! If you betray my confidence, my blind confidence, you need not fear my anger — be sure of that; I should die silently. But a wife does not deceive the man who leaves her free — for woman is never base. She tricks a tyrant; but an easy treachery, which would kill its victim, she will not commit — No, no! I will not think of it. Forgive this cry, this single cry, so natural to the heart of man!

Dear love, you will see de Marsay; he is now the lessee of our house, and he will leave you in possession of it. This nominal lease was necessary to avoid a useless loss. Our creditors, ignorant that their payment is a question of time only, would otherwise have seized the furniture and the temporary possession of the house. Be kind to de Marsay; I have the most

entire confidence in his capacity and his loyalty. Take him as your defender and adviser, make him your slave. However occupied, he will always find time to be devoted to you. I have placed the liquidation of my affairs and the payment of the debts in his hands. If he should advance some sum of which he should later feel in need I rely on you to pay it back. Remember, however, that I do not leave you to de Marsay, but *to yourself;* I do not seek to impose him upon you.

Alas! I have but an hour more to stay beside you; I cannot spend that hour in writing business — I count your breaths; I try to guess your thoughts in the slight motions of your sleep. I would I could infuse my blood into your veins that you might be a part of me, my thought your thought, and your heart mine — A murmur has just escaped your lips as though it were a soft reply. Be calm and beautiful forever as you are now! Ah! would that I possessed that fabulous fairy power which, with a wand, could make you sleep while I am absent, until, returning, I should wake you with a kiss.

How much I must love you, how much energy of soul I must possess, to leave you as I see you now! Adieu, my cherished one. Your poor Pink of Fashion is blown away by stormy winds, but — the wings of his good luck shall waft him back to you. No, my Ninie, I am not bidding you farewell, for I shall never leave you. Are you not the soul of my actions? Is not the hope of returning with happiness indestructible for *you* the end and aim of my endeavor? Does it not lead my every step? You will be with me every-

where. Ah! it will not be the sun of India, but the fire of your eyes that lights my way. Therefore be happy — as happy as a woman can be without her lover. I would the last kiss that I take from those dear lips were not a passive one; but, my Ninie, my adored one, I will not wake you. When you wake, you will find a tear upon your forehead — make it a talisman! Think, think of him who may, perhaps, die for you, far from you; think less of the husband than of the lover who confides you to God.

From the Comtesse de Manerville to her husband:

Dear, beloved one, — Your letter has plunged me into affliction. Had you the right to take this course, which must affect us equally, without consulting me? Are you free? Do you not belong to me? If you must go, why should I not follow you? You show me, Paul, that I am not indispensable to you. What have I done, to be deprived of my rights? Surely I count for something in this ruin. My luxuries have weighed somewhat in the scale. You make me curse the happy, careless life we have led for the last five years. To know that you are banished from France for years is enough to kill me. How soon can a fortune be made in India? Will you ever return?

I was right when I refused, with instinctive obstinacy, that separation as to property which my mother and you were so determined to carry out. What did I tell you then? Did I not warn you that it was casting a reflection upon you, and would ruin your credit? It was not until you were really angry that I gave way.

My dear Paul, never have you been so noble in my eyes as you are at this moment. To despair of nothing, to start courageously to seek a fortune! Only your character, your strength of mind could do it. I sit at your feet. A man who avows his weakness with your good faith, who rebuilds his fortune from the same motive that made him wreck it, for love's sake, for the sake of an irresistible passion, oh, Paul, that man is sublime! Therefore, fear nothing; go on, through all obstacles, not doubting your Natalie — for that would be doubting yourself. Poor darling, you mean to live in me? And I shall ever be in you. I shall not be here; I shall be wherever you are, wherever you go.

Though your letter has caused me the keenest pain, it has also filled me with joy — you have made me know those two extremes! Seeing how you love me, I have been proud to learn that my love is truly felt. Sometimes I have thought that I loved you more than you loved me. Now, I admit myself vanquished, you have added the delightful superiority — of loving — to all the others with which you are blest. That precious letter in which your soul reveals itself will lie upon my heart during all your absence; for my soul, too, is in it; that letter is my glory.

I shall go to live at Lanstrac with my mother. I die to the world; I will economize my income and pay your debts to their last farthing. From this day forth, Paul, I am another woman. I bid farewell forever to society; I will have no pleasures that you cannot share. Besides, Paul, I ought to leave Paris and live in retirement. Dear friend, you will soon

have a double reason to make your fortune. If your courage needed a spur you would find it in this. Cannot you guess? We shall have a child. Your cherished desires are granted. I feared to give you one of those false hopes which hurt so much — have we not had grief enough already on that score? I was determined not to be mistaken in this good news. To-day I feel certain, and it makes me happy to shed this joy upon your sorrows.

This morning, fearing nothing and thinking you still at home, I went to the Assumption; all things smiled upon me; how could I foresee misfortune? As I left the church I met my mother; she had heard of your distress, and came, by post, with all her savings, thirty thousand francs, hoping to help you. Ah! what a heart is hers, Paul! I felt joyful, and hurried home to tell you this good news, and to breakfast with you in the greenhouse, where I ordered just the dainties that you like. Well, Augustine brought me your letter, — a letter from you, when we had slept together! A cold fear seized me; it was like a dream! I read your letter! I read it weeping, and my mother shared my tears. I was half-dead. Such love, such courage, such happiness, such misery! The richest fortunes of the heart, and the momentary ruin of all interests! To lose you at a moment when my admiration of your greatness thrilled me! what woman could have resisted such a tempest of emotion? To know you far away when your hand upon my heart would have stilled its throbbings; to feel that *you* were not here to give me that look so precious to me, to rejoice in our new hopes; that I was not with you to

soften your sorrows by those caresses which made your Natalie so dear to you! I wished to start, to follow you, to fly to you. But my mother told me you had taken passage in a ship which leaves Bordeaux to-morrow, that I could not reach you except by post, and, moreover, that it was madness in my present state to risk our future by attempting to follow you. I could not bear such violent emotions; I was taken ill, and am writing to you now in bed.

My mother is doing all she can to stop certain calumnies which seem to have got about on your disaster. The Vandenesses, Charles and Félix, have earnestly defended you; but your friend de Marsay treats the affair satirically. He laughs at your accusers instead of replying to them. I do not like his way of lightly brushing aside such serious attacks. Are you not deceived in him? However, I will obey you; I will make him my friend. Do not be anxious, my adored one, on the points that concern your honor; is it not mine as well? My diamonds shall be pledged; we intend, mamma and I, to employ our utmost resources in the payment of your debts; and we shall try to buy back your vineyard at Belle-Rose. My mother, who understands business like a lawyer, blames you very much for not having told her of your embarrassments. She would not have bought — thinking to please you — the Grainrouge domain, and then she could have lent you that money as well as the thirty thousand francs she brought with her. She is in despair at your decision; she fears the climate of India for your health. She entreats you to be sober, and not to let yourself be trapped by women — That

made me laugh; I am as sure of you as I am of myself. You will return to me rich and faithful. I alone know your feminine delicacy, and the secret sentiments which make you a human flower worthy of the gardens of heaven. The Bordeaux people were right when they gave you your floral nickname.

But alas! who will take care of my delicate flower? My heart is rent with dreadful ideas. I, his wife, Natalie, I am here, and perhaps he suffers far away from me! And not to share your pains, your vexations, your dangers! In whom will you confide? how will you live without that ear into which you have hitherto poured all? Dear, sensitive plant, swept away by this storm, will you be able to survive in another soil than your native land?

It seems to me that I have been alone for centuries. I have wept sorely. To be the cause of your ruin! What a text for the thoughts of a loving woman! You treated me like a child to whom we give all it asks, or like a courtesan, allowed by some thoughtless youth to squander his fortune. Ah! such indulgence was, in truth, an insult. Did you think I could not live without fine dresses, balls and operas and social triumphs? Am I so frivolous a woman? Do you think me incapable of serious thought, of ministering to your fortune as I have to your pleasures? If you were not so far away, and so unhappy, I would blame you for that impertinence. Why lower your wife in that way? Good heavens! what induced me to go into society at all? — to flatter your vanity; I adorned myself for you, as you well know. If I did wrong, I am punished, cruelly; your absence is a harsh expiation of our mutual life.

Perhaps my happiness was too complete; it had to be paid by some great trial — and here it is. There is nothing now for me but solitude. Yes, I shall live at Lanstrac, the place your father laid out, the house you yourself refurnished so luxuriously. There I shall live, with my mother and my child, and await you, — sending you daily, night and morning, the prayers of all. Remember that our love is a talisman against all evil. I have no more doubt of you than you can have of me. What comfort can I put into this letter, — I so desolate, so broken, with the lonely years before me, like a desert to cross. But no! I am not utterly unhappy; the desert will be brightened by our son, — yes, it must be a *son*, must it not?

And now, adieu, my own beloved; our love and prayers will follow you. The tears you see upon this paper will tell you much that I cannot write. I kiss you on this little square of paper, see! below. Take those kisses from

Your Natalie.

This letter threw Paul into a revery caused as much by memories of the past as by these fresh assurances of love. The happier a man is, the more he trembles. In souls which are exclusively tender — and exclusive tenderness carries with it a certain amount of weakness — jealousy and uneasiness exist in direct proportion to the amount of the happiness and its extent. Strong souls are neither jealous nor fearful; jealousy

is doubt, fear is meanness. Unlimited belief is the principal attribute of a great man. If he is deceived (for strength as well as weakness may make a man a dupe) his contempt will serve him as an axe with which to cut through all. This greatness, however, is the exception. Which of us has not known what it is to be abandoned by the spirit which sustains our frail machine, and to hearken to that mysterious Voice denying all? Paul, his mind going over the past, and caught here and there by irrefutable facts, believed and doubted all. Lost in thought, a prey to an awful and involuntary incredulity, which was combated by the instincts of his own pure love and his faith in Natalie, he read and re-read that wordy letter, unable to decide the question which it raised either for or against his wife. Love is sometimes as great and true when smothered in words as it is in brief, strong sentences.

To understand the situation into which Paul de Manerville was about to enter we must think of him as he was at this moment, floating upon the ocean as he floated upon his past, looking back upon the years of his life as he looked at the limitless water and cloudless sky about him, and ending his revery by returning, through tumults of doubt, to faith, the pure, unalloyed and perfect faith of the Christian and the lover, which enforced the voice of his faithful heart.

It is necessary to give here his own letter to de Marsay written on leaving Paris, to which his friend replied in the letter he received through old Mathias from the dock: —

From Comte Paul de Manerville to Monsieur le Marquis Henri de Marsay:

Henri, — I have to say to you one of the most vital words a man can say to his friend: — I am ruined. When you read this I shall be on the point of sailing from Bordeaux for Calcutta on the brig "Belle-Amélie."

You will find in the hands of your notary a deed which only needs your signature to be legal. In it, I lease my house to you for six years at a nominal rent. Send a duplicate of that deed to my wife. I am forced to take this precaution that Natalie may continue to live in her own home without fear of being driven out by creditors.

I also convey to you by deed the income of my share of the entailed property for four years; the whole amounting to one hundred and fifty thousand francs, which sum I beg you to lend me and to send in a bill of exchange on some house in Bordeaux to my notary, Maître Mathias. My wife will give you her signature to this paper as an endorsement of your claim to my income. If the revenues of the entail do not pay this loan as quickly as I now expect, you and I will settle on my return. The sum I ask for is absolutely necessary to enable me to seek my fortune in India; and if I know you, I shall receive it in Bordeaux the night before I sail.

I have acted as you would have acted in my place. I held firm to the last moment, letting no one suspect my ruin. Before the news of the seizure of my property at Bordeaux reached Paris, I had attempted, with one hundred thousand francs which I obtained on

notes, to recover myself by play. Some lucky stroke might still have saved me. I lost.

How have I ruined myself? By my own will, Henri. From the first month of my married life I saw that I could not keep up the style in which I started. I knew the result; but I chose to shut my eyes; I could not say to my wife, "We must leave Paris and live at Lanstrac." I have ruined myself for her as men ruin themselves for a mistress, but I knew it all along. Between ourselves, I am neither a fool nor a weak man. A fool does not let himself be ruled with his eyes open by a passion; and a man who starts for India to reconstruct his fortune, instead of blowing out his brains, is not weak.

I shall return rich, or I shall never return at all. Only, my dear friend, as I want wealth solely for *her*, as I must be absent six years at least, and as I will not risk being duped in any way, I confide to you my wife. I know no better guardian. Being childless, a lover might be dangerous to her. Henri! I love her madly, basely, without proper pride. I would forgive her, I think, an infidelity, not because I am certain of avenging it, but because I would kill myself to leave her free and happy — since I could not make her happiness myself. But what have I to fear? Natalie feels for me that friendship which is independent of love, but which preserves love. I have treated her like a petted child. I took such delight in my sacrifices, one led so naturally to another, that she can never be false; she would be a monster if she were. Love begets love.

Alas! shall I tell you all, my dear Henri? I have

just written her a letter in which I let her think that I go with heart of hope and brow serene; that neither jealousy, nor doubt, nor fear is in my soul, — a letter, in short, such as a son might write to his mother, aware that he was going to his death. Good God! de Marsay, as I wrote it hell was in my soul! I am the most wretched man on earth. Yes, yes, to you the cries, to you the grinding of my teeth! I avow myself to you a despairing lover; I would rather live these six years sweeping the streets beneath her windows than return a millionnaire at the end of them — if I could choose. I suffer agony; I shall pass from pain to pain until I hear from you that you will take the trust which you alone can fulfil or accomplish.

Oh! my dear de Marsay, this woman is indispensable to my life; she is my sun, my atmosphere. Take her under your shield and buckler, keep her faithful to me, even if she wills it not. Yes, I could be satisfied with a half-happiness. Be her guardian, her chaperon, for I could have no distrust of you. Prove to her that in betraying me she would do a low and vulgar thing, and be no better than the common run of women; tell her that faithfulness will prove her lofty spirit.

She probably has fortune enough to continue her life of luxury and ease. But if she lacks a pleasure, if she has caprices which she cannot satisfy, be her banker, and do not fear, I *will* return with wealth.

But, after all, these fears are vain! Natalie is an angel of purity and virtue. When Félix de Vandenesse fell deeply in love with her and began to show

her certain attentions, I had only to let her see the danger, and she instantly thanked me so affectionately that I was moved to tears. She said that her dignity and reputation demanded that she should not close her doors abruptly to any man, but that she knew well how to dismiss him. She did, in fact, receive him so coldly that the affair all ended for the best. We have never had any other subject of dispute — if, indeed, a friendly talk could be called a dispute — in all our married life.

And now, my dear Henri, I bid you farewell in the spirit of a man. Misfortune has come. No matter what the cause, it is here. I strip to meet it. Poverty and Natalie are two irreconcilable terms. The balance may be close between my assets and my liabilities, but no one shall have cause to complain of me. But, should any unforeseen event occur to imperil my honor, I count on you.

Send letters under cover to the Governor of India at Calcutta. I have friendly relations with his family, and some one there will care for all letters that come to me from Europe. Dear friend, I hope to find you the same de Marsay on my return, — the man who scoffs at everything and yet is receptive of the feelings of others when they accord with the grandeur he is conscious of in himself. You stay in Paris, friend; but when you read these words, I shall be crying out, "To Carthage!"

The Marquis Henri de Marsay to Comte Paul de Manerville:

So, so, Monsieur le comte, you have made a wreck of it! Monsieur l'ambassadeur has gone to the bottom! Are these the fine things that you were doing?

Why, Paul, why have you kept away from me? If you had said a single word, my poor old fellow, I would have made your position plain to you. Your wife has refused me her endorsement. May that one word unseal your eyes! But, if that does not suffice, learn that your notes have been protested at the instigation of a Sieur Lecuyer, formerly head-clerk to Maître Solonet, a notary in Bordeaux. That usurer in embryo (who came from Gascony for jobbery) is the proxy of your very honorable mother-in-law, who is the actual holder of your notes for one hundred thousand francs, on which I am told that worthy woman doled out to you only seventy thousand. Compared with Madame Évangélista, papa Gobseck is flannel, velvet, vanilla cream, a sleeping draught. Your vineyard of Belle-Rose is to fall into the clutches of your wife, to whom her mother pays the difference between the price it goes for at the auction sale and the amount of her dower claim upon it. Madame Évangélista will also have the farms at Guadet and Grassol, and the mortgages on your house in Bordeaux already belong to her, in the names of straw men provided by Solonet.

Thus these two excellent women will make for themselves a united income of one hundred and twenty thousand francs a year out of your misfortunes and forced sale of property, added to the revenue of

some thirty-odd thousand on the Grand-livre which these cats already possess.

The endorsement of your wife was not needed; for this morning the said Sieur Lecuyer came to offer me a return of the sum I lent you in exchange for a legal transfer of my rights. The vintage of 1825 which your mother-in-law keeps in the cellars at Lanstrac will suffice to pay me.

These two women have calculated, evidently, that you are now upon the ocean; but I send this letter by courier, so that you may have time to follow the advice I now give you.

I made Lecuyer talk. I disentangled from his lies, his language, and his reticence, the threads I lacked to bring to light the whole plot of the domestic conspiracy hatched against you. This evening, at the Spanish embassy, I shall offer my admiring compliments to your mother-in-law and your wife. I shall pay court to Madame Évangélista; I intend to desert you basely, and say sly things to your discredit, — nothing openly, or that Mascarille in petticoats would detect my purpose. How did you make her such an enemy? That is what I want to know. If you had had the wit to be in love with that woman before you married her daughter, you would to-day be peer of France, Duc de Manerville, and, possibly, ambassador to Madrid.

If you had come to me at the time of your marriage, I would have helped you to analyze and know the women to whom you were binding yourself; out of our mutual observations safety might have been yours. But, instead of that, these women judged me, became

afraid of me, and separated us. If you had not stupidly given in to them and turned me the cold shoulder, they would never have been able to ruin you. Your wife brought on the coldness between us, instigated by her mother, to whom she wrote two letters a week, — a fact to which you paid no attention. I recognized my Paul when I heard that detail.

Within a month I shall be so intimate with your mother-in-law that I shall hear from her the reasons of the hispano-italiano hatred which she feels for you, — for you, one of the best and kindest men on earth! Did she hate you before her daughter fell in love with Félix de Vandenesse; that 's a question in my mind. If I had not taken a fancy to go to the East with Montriveau, Ronquerolles, and a few other good fellows of your acquaintance, I should have been in a position to tell you something about that affair, which was beginning just as I left Paris. I saw the first gleams even then of your misfortune. But what gentleman is base enough to open such a subject unless appealed to? Who shall dare to injure a woman, or break that illusive mirror in which his friend delights in gazing at the fairy scenes of a happy marriage? Illusions are the riches of the heart.

Your wife, dear friend, is, I believe I may say, in the fullest acceptation of the word, a fashionable woman. She thinks of nothing but her social success, her dress, her pleasures; she goes to opera and theatre and balls; she rises late and drives to the Bois, dines out, or gives a dinner-party. Such a life seems to me for women very much what war is for

men; the public sees only the victors; it forgets the dead. Many delicate women perish in this conflict; those who come out of it have iron constitutions, consequently no heart, but good stomachs. There lies the reason of the cold insensibility of social life. Fine souls keep themselves reserved, weak and tender natures succumb; the rest are cobblestones which hold the social ocean in its place, water-worn and rounded by the tide, but never worn-out. Your wife has maintained that life with ease; she looks made for it; she is always fresh and beautiful. To my mind the deduction is plain, — she has never loved you; and you have loved her like a madman.

To strike out love from that silicious nature a man of iron was needed. After standing, but without enduring, the shock of Lady Dudley, Félix was the fitting mate to Natalie. There is no great merit in divining that to you she was indifferent. In love with her yourself, you have been incapable of perceiving the cold nature of a young woman whom you have fashioned and trained for a man like Vandenesse. The coldness of your wife, if you perceived it, you set down, with the stupid jurisprudence of married people, to the honor of her reserve and her innocence. Like all husbands, you thought you could keep her virtuous in a society where women whisper from ear to ear that which men are afraid to say.

No, your wife has liked the social benefits she derived from marriage, but the private burdens of it she found rather heavy. Those burdens, that tax was — you! Seeing nothing of all this, you have gone on digging your abysses (to use the hackneyed words of

rhetoric) and covering them with flowers. You have mildly obeyed the law which rules the ruck of men; from which I desired to protect you. Dear fellow! only one thing was wanting to make you as dull as the bourgeois deceived by his wife, who is all astonishment or wrath, and that is that you should talk to me of your sacrifices, your love for Natalie, and chant that psalm: "Ungrateful would she be if she betrayed me; I have done this, I have done that, and more will I do; I will go to the ends of the earth, to the Indies for her sake. I — I — " etc. My dear Paul, have you never lived in Paris, have you never had the honor of belonging by the ties of friendship to Henri de Marsay, that you should be so ignorant of the commonest things, the primitive principles that move the feminine mechanism, the a-b-c of their hearts? Then hear me: —

Suppose you exterminate yourself, suppose you go to Saint-Pélagie for a woman's debts, suppose you kill a score of men, desert a dozen women, serve like Laban, cross the deserts, skirt the galleys, cover yourself with glory, cover yourself with shame, refuse, like Nelson, to fight a battle till you have kissed the shoulder of Lady Hamilton, dash yourself, like Bonaparte, upon the bridge at Arcola, go mad like Roland, risk your life to dance five minutes with a woman — my dear fellow, what have all those things to do with *love?* If love were won by samples such as those mankind would be too happy. A spurt of prowess at the moment of desire would give a man the woman that he wanted. But love, *love*, my good Paul, is a faith like that in the Immaculate conception of the

Holy Virgin; it comes, or it does not come. Will the mines of Potosi, or the shedding of our blood, or the making of our fame serve to waken an involuntary, an inexplicable sentiment? Young men like you, who expect to be loved as the balance of your account, are nothing else than usurers. Our legitimate wives owe us virtue and children, but they don't owe us love.

Love, my dear Paul, is the sense of pleasure given and received, and the certainty of giving and receiving it; love is a desire incessantly moving and growing, incessantly satisfied and insatiable. The day when Vandenesse stirred the cord of a desire in your wife's heart which you had left untouched, all your self-satisfied affection, your gifts, your deeds, your money, ceased to be even memories; one emotion of love in your wife's heart has cast out the treasures of your own passion, which are now nothing better than old iron. Félix has the virtues and the beauties in her eyes, and the simple moral is that blinded by your own love you never made her love you.

Your mother-in-law is on the side of the lover against the husband, — secretly or not; she may have closed her eyes, or she may have opened them; I know not what she has done — but one thing is certain, she is for her daughter, and against you. During the fifteen years that I have observed society, I have never yet seen a mother who, under such circumstances, abandons her daughter. This indulgence seems to be an inheritance transmitted in the female line. What man can blame it? Some copyist of the Civil code, perhaps, who sees formulas only in the place of feelings.

As for your present position, the dissipation into which the life of a fashionable woman cast you, and your own easy nature, possibly your vanity, have opened the way for your wife and her mother to get rid of you by this ruin so skilfully contrived. From all of which you will conclude, my good friend, that the mission you intrusted to me, and which I would all the more faithfully fulfil because it amused me, is, necessarily, null and void. The evil you wish me to prevent is accomplished, — *consummatum est.*

Forgive me, dear friend, if I write to you, as you say, *à la* de Marsay on subjects which must seem to you very serious. Far be it from me to dance upon the grave of a friend, like heirs upon that of a progenitor. But you have written to me that you mean to act the part of a man, and I believe you; I therefore treat you as a man of the world, and not as a lover. For you, this blow ought to be like the brand on the shoulder of a galley-slave, which flings him forever into a life of systematic opposition to society. You are now freed of one evil: marriage possessed you; it now behooves you to turn round and possess marriage.

Paul, I am your friend in the fullest acceptation of the word. If you had a brain in an iron skull, if you had the energy which has come to you too late, I would have proved my friendship by telling you things that would have made you walk upon humanity as upon a carpet. But when I did talk to you guardedly of Parisian civilization, when I told you in the disguise of fiction some of the actual adventures of my youth, you regarded them as mere romance and would

not see their bearing. When I told you that history of a lawyer at the galleys branded for forgery, who committed the crime to give his wife, adored like yours, an income of thirty thousand francs, and whom his wife denounced that she might be rid of him and free to love another man, you exclaimed, and other fools who were supping with us exclaimed against me. Well, my dear Paul, you were that lawyer, less the galleys.

Your friends here are not sparing you. The sister of the two Vandenesses, the Marquise de Listomère and all her set, in which, by the bye, that little Rastignac has enrolled himself, — the scamp will make his way! — Madame d'Aiglemont and her salon, the Lenoncourts, the Comtesse Ferraud, Madame d'Espard, the Nucingens, the Spanish ambassador, in short, all the cliques in society are flinging mud upon you. You are a bad man, a gambler, a dissipated fellow who has squandered his property. After paying your debts a great many times, your wife, an angel of virtue, has just redeemed your notes for one hundred thousand francs, although her property was separate from yours. Luckily, you had done the best you could do by disappearing. If you had stayed here you would have made her bed in the straw; the poor woman would have been the victim of her conjugal devotion!

When a man attains to power, my dear Paul, he has all the virtues of an epitaph; let him fall into poverty, and he has more sins than the Prodigal Son; society at the present moment gives you the vices of a Don Juan. You gambled at the Bourse, you had

licentious tastes which cost you fabulous sums of money to gratify; you paid enormous interests to money-lenders. The two Vandenesses have told everywhere how Gigonnet gave you for six thousand francs an ivory frigate, and made your valet buy it back for three hundred in order to sell it to you again. The incident did really happen to Maxime de Trailles about nine years ago; but it fits your present circumstances so well that Maxime has forever lost the command of his frigate.

In short, I can't tell you one-half that is said; you have supplied a whole encyclopædia of gossip which the women have an interest in swelling. Your wife is having an immense success. Last evening at the opera Madame Firmiani began to repeat to me some of the things that are being said. "Don't talk of that," I replied. "You know nothing of the real truth, you people. Paul has robbed the Bank, cheated the Treasury, murdered Ezzelin and three Medoras in the rue Saint-Denis, and I think, between ourselves, that he is a member of the Dix-Mille. His associate is the famous Jacques Collin, on whom the police have been unable to lay a hand since he escaped from the galleys. Paul gave him a room in his house; you see he is capable of anything; in fact, the two have gone off to India together to rob the Great Mogul." Madame Firmiani, like the distinguished woman that she is, saw that she ought not to convert her beautiful lips into a mouthpiece for false denunciation.

Many persons, when they hear of these tragi-comedies of life, refuse to believe them. They take the side of human nature and fine sentiments; they declare

that these things do not exist. But Talleyrand said a fine thing, my dear fellow: "All things happen." Truly, things happen under our very noses which are more amazing than this domestic plot of yours; but society has an interest in denying them, and in declaring itself calumniated. Often these dramas are played so naturally and with such a varnish of good taste that even I have to rub the lens of my opera-glass to see to the bottom of them. But, I repeat to you, when a man is a friend of mine, when we have received together the baptism of champagne and have knelt together before the altar of the Venus Commodus, when the crooked fingers of play have given us their benediction, if that man finds himself in a false position I 'd ruin a score of families to do him justice.

You must be aware from all this that I love you. Have I ever in my life written a letter as long as this? No. Therefore, read with attention what I still have to say.

Alas! Paul, I shall be forced to take to writing, for I am taking to politics. I am going into public life. I intend to have, within five years, the portfolio of a ministry or some embassy. There comes an age when the only mistress a man can serve is his country. I enter the ranks of those who intend to upset not only the ministry, but the whole present system of government. In short, I swim in the waters of a certain prince who is lame of the foot only, — a man whom I regard as a statesman of genius whose name will go down to posterity; a prince as complete in his way as a great artist may be in his.

Several of us, Ronquerolles, Montriveau, the Grand-

lieus, La Roche-Hugon, Sérisy, Féraud, and Granville, have allied ourselves against the "parti-prêtre," as the party-ninny represented by the "Constitutionnel" has ingeniously said. We intend to overturn the Navarreins, Lenoncourts, Vandenesses, and the Grand Almonry. In order to succeed we shall even ally ourselves with Lafayette, the Orleanists, and the Left, — people whom we can throttle on the morrow of victory, for no government in the world is possible with their principles. We are capable of anything for the good of the country — and our own.

Now, then, my dear Paul, instead of setting sail for India you would do a much wiser thing to navigate with me the waters of the Seine. Believe me, Paris is still the place where fortune, abundant fortune, can be won. Potosi is in the rue Vivienne, the rue de la Paix, the Place Vendôme, the rue de Rivoli. In all other places and countries material works and labors, marches and counter-marches, and sweatings of the brow are necessary to the building up of fortune; but in Paris *thought* suffices. Here, every man even mentally mediocre, can see a mine of wealth as he puts on his slippers, or picks his teeth after dinner, in his down-sitting and his up-rising. Find me another place on the globe where a good round stupid idea brings in more money, or is sooner understood than it is here.

If I reach the top of the ladder, as I shall, am I the man to refuse you a helping hand, an influence, a signature? We shall want, we young roués, a faithful friend on whom to count, if only to compromise him and make him a scape-goat, or send him to die

like a common soldier to save his general. Government is impossible without a man of honor at one's side, in whom to confide and with whom we can do and say everything.

Here is what I propose. Let the "Belle-Amélie" sail without you; come back here like a thunderbolt; I 'll arrange a duel for you with Vandenesse in which you shall have the first shot, and you can wing him like a pigeon. In France the husband who shoots his rival becomes at once respectable and respected. No one ever cavils at him again. Fear, my dear fellow, is a valuable social element, a means of success for those who lower their eyes before the gaze of no man living. I who care as little to live as to drink a glass of milk, and who have never felt the emotion of fear, I have remarked the strange effects produced by that sentiment upon our modern manners. Some men tremble to lose the enjoyments to which they are attached, others dread to leave a woman. The old adventurous habits of other days when life was flung away like a garment exist no longer. The bravery of a great many men is nothing more than a clever calculation on the fear of their adversary. The Poles are the only men in Europe who fight for the pleasure of fighting; they cultivate the art for the art's sake, and not for speculation.

Now hear me: kill Vandenesse, and your wife trembles, your mother-in-law trembles, the public trembles, and you recover your position, you prove your grand passion for your wife, you subdue society, you subdue your wife, you become a hero. Such is France. As for your embarrassments, I hold a hun-

dred thousand francs for you; you can pay your principal debts, and sell what property you have left with a power of redemption, for you will soon obtain an office which will enable you by degrees to pay off your creditors. Then, as for your wife, once enlightened as to her character you can rule her. When you loved her you had no power to manage her; not loving her, you will have an unconquerable force. I will undertake, myself, to make your mother-in-law as supple as a glove; for you must recover the use of the hundred and fifty thousand francs a year those two women have squeezed out of you.

Therefore, I say, renounce this expatriation which seems to me no better than a pan of charcoal or a pistol to your head. To go away is to justify all calumnies. The gambler who leaves the table to get his money loses it when he returns; we must have our gold in our pockets. Let us now, you and I, be two gamblers on the green baize of politics; between us loans are in order. Therefore take post-horses, come back instantly, and renew the game. You 'll win it with Henri de Marsay for your partner, for Henri de Marsay knows how to will, and how to strike.

See how we stand politically. My father is in the British ministry; we shall have close relations with Spain through the Évangélistas, for, as soon as your mother-in-law and I have measured claws she will find there is nothing to gain by fighting the devil. Montriveau is our lieutenant-general; he will certainly be minister of war before long, and his eloquence will give him great ascendency in the Chamber. Ronquerolles will be minister of State and privy-coun-

cillor; Martial de la Roche-Hugon is minister to Germany and peer of France; Sérisy leads the Council of State, to which he is indispensable; Granville holds the magistracy, to which his sons belong; the Grandlieus stand well at court; Ferraud is the soul of the Gondréville coterie, — low intriguers who are always on the surface of things, I 'm sure I don't know why. Thus supported, what have we to fear? The money question is a mere nothing when this great wheel of fortune rolls for us. What is a woman? — you are not a schoolboy. What is life, my dear fellow, if you let a woman be the whole of it? A boat you can't command, without a rudder, but not without a magnet, and tossed by every wind that blows. Pah!

The great secret of social alchemy, my dear Paul, is to get the most we can out of each age of life through which we pass; to have and to hold the buds of our spring, the flowers of our summer, the fruits of our autumn. We amused ourselves once, a few good fellows and I, for a dozen or more years, like mousquetaires, black, red, and gray; we denied ourselves nothing, not even an occasional filibustering here and there. Now we are going to shake down the plums which age and experience have ripened. Be one of us; you shall have your share in the *pudding* we are going to cook.

Come; you will find a friend all yours in the skin of

H. DE MARSAY.

As Paul de Manerville ended the reading of this letter, which fell like the blows of a pickaxe on the

edifice of his hopes, his illusions, and his love, the vessel which bore him from France was beyond the Azores. In the midst of this utter devastation a cold and impotent anger laid hold of him.

"What had I done to them?" he said to himself.

That is the question of fools, of feeble beings, who, seeing nothing, can nothing foresee. Then he cried aloud: "Henri! Henri!" to his loyal friend. Many a man would have gone mad; Paul went to bed and slept that heavy sleep which follows immense disasters, — the sleep that seized Napoleon after Waterloo.

A DOUBLE LIFE.

A DOUBLE LIFE.

To Madame la Comtesse Louise de Türheim,

As a mark of remembrance and affectionate respect from her humble servant,

De Balzac.

I.

THE SECOND LIFE.

The rue du Tourniquet-Saint-Jean, formerly one of the darkest and most tortuous streets of the old quarter of Paris which encircles the Hôtel-de-Ville, wound round the little gardens of the prefecture till it ended in the rue du Martroi at the angle of an old wall, now pulled down. Here could be seen the turnstile to which the street owed its name, a relic of the past that was not destroyed until 1823, when the city of Paris caused to be constructed on the site of a little garden belonging to the Hôtel-de-Ville a splendid ball-room for the fête given to the Duc d'Angoulême on his return from Spain.

The widest part of the rue du Tourniquet was near its junction with the rue de la Tixeranderie, where it was only five feet wide. Consequently, in rainy weather the blackened water of the gutter washed the feet of the old houses, bringing along with it the filth and refuse deposited by each household at the various

posts along the street. The carts for the removal of such rubbish could not enter the narrow way, and the dwellers thereon reckoned upon the storms of heaven to cleanse their ever-muddy street — though it never could be clean. When the summer sun struck vertically down, a line of gold, sharp as the blade of a sabre, illuminated momentarily the darkness of the street, but without drying the perpetual dampness which reigned from the ground-floor to the next floor of these dark and silent houses.

The inhabitants, who lighted their lamps at five o'clock in the month of June, never put them out in winter. Even to-day, if some courageous pedestrian ventures to go from the Marais to the quays by taking, at the end of the rue du Chaume, the several streets named L'Homme Armé, Des Billettes, and Des Deux-Portes, which lead into that of the Tourniquet-Saint-Jean, he will fancy he has been walking through a crypt or cellar.

Nearly all the streets of the old Paris resembled this damp and sombre labyrinth, where antiquaries can still find several historical singularities to admire. For instance, when the house which stood at the corner of the rue du Tourniquet and the rue de la Tixeranderie still existed, observers would have noticed two heavy iron rings built into the wall, a remnant of the chains which the watchman of the quarter put up each night as a measure of public safety.

This house, remarkable for its antiquity, had been built with precautions which fully proved the unhealthiness of these old dwellings; for, in order to sweeten the ground-floor, the walls of the cellar were raised

fully two feet above the level of the soil, which necessitated a rise of three steps in order to enter the house. The door-casing described a semicircular arch, the apex of which was adorned with the carving of a woman's head and sundry arabesques, much injured by time. Three windows, the sills of which were about on a level with a man's head, belonged to a small apartment on the ground-floor looking on the rue du Tourniquet. These windows were protected by strong iron bars placed far apart, ending in a round projection like those of a baker's grating.

If any inquisitive pedestrian had cast his eyes upon the two rooms of this apartment in the daytime, he could have seen nothing within them; a July sun was needed to distinguish in the second room two beds draped with green serge under the panelled ceiling of an old alcove. But in the afternoons, toward three o'clock, when a lamp was lighted, it was possible to see through the window of the first room an old woman sitting on a stool at the corner of a fireplace, where she was, at that hour, stirring something in a chafing-dish which resembled those stews that Parisian portresses know so well how to concoct. A few kitchen utensils hanging on the wall at the end of this room could be seen in the half-light. An old table, standing on three legs and devoid of linen, held knives and forks and pewter plates, and, presently, the dish which the old crone was cooking. Three miserable chairs furnished the room, which served the inhabitants for kitchen and dining-room. Over the fireplace was a fragment of mirror, a tinder-box, three glasses, some sulphur matches, and a large white pot, much cracked.

The tiled floor of the hearth, the utensils, the fireplace, were pleasing to the eye from the evident spirit of neatness and economy which reigned in that cold, dark home.

The pale and wrinkled face of the old woman was in keeping with the gloom of the street and the mouldiness of the building. One might have thought, to see her seated in her chair when doing nothing, that she stuck to the house as a snail to its shell. Her face, in which a vague expression of malice underlay an assumed good-humor, was topped by a flat tulle cap, which scarcely covered her white hair; her large gray eyes were as still as the street, and the many wrinkles on her skin might be compared to the cracks and crevices of the walls. Whether she was born to poverty, or whether she had fallen from some better estate, she now seemed long resigned to her melancholy existence. From sunrise till evening, except while preparing the meals, or, basket in hand, she went out for provisions, this old creature spent her time in the adjoining room, before the third window and opposite to a young girl.

At all hours of the day this young girl, sitting in an old arm-chair covered with red velvet, her head bent down over an embroidery-frame, worked industriously. Her mother had a green tambour-frame on her lap and seemed to be making tulle; but her fingers moved the bobbins stiffly, and her sight was evidently failing, for her nose, of three-score years and over, bore a pair of those old-fashioned spectacles which hold to the tips of the nostrils according to the force with which they are pinched on. At night, these two laborious creatures

placed a lamp between them; the light of which, falling through two glass globes filled with water, threw a strong ray upon their work, which enabled the old woman to see the looser strands of the bobbins of her tambour, and the young girl the more delicate parts of the pattern she was embroidering.

The curve of the iron bars had enabled the girl to put on the sill of the window a long wooden box filled with earth; in which were vegetating sweet-peas, nasturtiums, a sickly honeysuckle, and a few convolvuli whose weakly tendrils were clinging to the bars. These etiolated plants produced a few pale flowers; another feature strangely in keeping, which mingled I scarcely know what of sweetness and of sadness in the picture, framed by the window, of those toiling figures. A mere glance at that interior would have given the most self-absorbed pedestrian a perfect image of the life led by the work-women of Paris; for it was evident that the girl lived solely by her needle. Many persons reaching the turnstile had wondered how any young creature living in that noisome place could have kept the bright colors of youth. The lively imagination of a student on his way to the "pays latin" might have compared this dark and vegetative life to that of ivy draping a cold stone-wall, or to that of peasants born to toil, who labor and die ignored by the world they have contributed to feed. A man of property said to himself as he looked at the house with the eye of an owner: —

"What would become of those two women if embroidery should go out of fashion?"

Among the persons whose duty took them at fixed

hours through this narrow way, either to the Hôtel de Ville or to the Palais, some might perhaps have been found, whose interest in the sight would take a more selfish view of it; some widower, perhaps, or some elderly Adonis might have thought that the evident distress of the mother and daughter would make the innocent work-girl a cheap and easy bargain. Or perhaps some worthy clerk with a salary of twelve hundred francs a year, the daily witness of the girl's industrious ardor, might have reckoned from that the purity of her life and have dreamed of uniting one obscure life to another obscure life, one plodding toil to another as laborious, — bringing at any rate the arm of a man to sustain existence, and a peaceful love, colorless as the flowers in the window.

Such vague hopes did at times brighten the dull gray eyes of the old mother. In the morning, after their humble breakfast, she would take her tambour-frame (more for appearances, it would seem, than for actual work, because she laid down her spectacles on the table beside her) and proceeded to watch from half-past eight to about ten o'clock all the habitual passers through the street at that hour. She noted their glances; made observations on their demeanor, their dress, their countenances; she seemed to bargain with them for her daughter, so eagerly did her keen eyes seek to open communications, by manœuvres like those behind the scenes of a theatre. To her this morning review was indeed a play; perhaps it was her only pleasure.

The daughter seldom raised her head: modesty, or perhaps the painful sense of poverty, kept her eyes

closely fixed upon her work; so that sometimes, in order to make her show her face to a passer in the street, her mother would give a cry of surprise. A clerk with a new overcoat, or an habitual passer appearing with a woman on his arm might then have beheld the slightly turned-up nose of the little work-girl, her rosy mouth, and her gray eyes, sparkling with life in spite of her crushing toil. Those wakeful, laborious nights were only shown by the more or less white circle beneath the eyes on the fresh, pure skin above the cheek-bones. The poor young thing seemed born for love and gayety, — for love, which had painted above her rounded eyelids two perfect arches, and had given her such a forest of chestnut hair that she might have hidden her whole person under its impenetrable veil; for gayety, which moved her expressive nostrils, and made two dimples in her glowing cheeks, — for gayety, that flower of hope, which gave her strength to look without faltering at the barren path of life before her.

The beautiful hair of the girl was always carefully arranged. Like all other work-women of Paris, she thought her toilet complete when she had braided and smoothed her hair and had twirled into circles the two little locks on either side of the temples, the effect of which was to set off the whiteness of her skin. The way her hair grew upon her head was so full of grace, the bistre line clearly defined upon her neck gave so charming an idea of her youth and its attractions, that an observer beholding her as she bent over her work, not raising her head at any noise, would have put down such apparent unconsciousness to coquetry.

"Caroline, there 's a new regular man! none of the old ones compare with him."

These words, said in a low voice by the mother one morning in the month of August, 1815, conquered, apparently, the indifference of the girl, for she looked into the street; but the new man was nearly out of sight.

"Which way did he go?" she asked.

"He 'll be back, no doubt, about four o'clock. I shall see him coming and I 'll kick your foot. I 'm certain he 'll come back, for it is now three days since he took to coming through the street. But he is n't regular as to time. The first day he came at six, next day it was four, yesterday five. I am sure I have seen him at some time or other, elsewhere. I dare say he 's a clerk at the prefecture who has gone to live in the Marais — Oh, look here!" she added, after glancing into the street, "our monsieur with the brown coat has taken to a wig! Heavens! how it does change him!"

The monsieur with the brown coat must have been the last of the *habitués* who formed the daily procession, for the old mother now put on her spectacles, resumed her work with a sigh, and looked at her daughter with so singular an expression that Lavater himself would have been puzzled to analyze it, — admiration, gratitude, a sort of hope for better things, mingled with the pride of possessing so pretty a daughter.

That evening, about four o'clock, the old woman pushed the girl's foot, and Caroline raised her head in time to see the new actor whose periodical passing

was now to enliven the scene of their lives. Tall, thin, pale, and dressed in black, the man, who was about forty years old, had something solemn in his gait and demeanor. When his tawny, piercing eye met the curious glance of the old woman, it made her tremble; and she fancied he had the gift, or the habit, of reading hearts. Certainly his first aspect was chilling as the air itself of that gloomy street.

Was the cadaverous, discolored complexion of that haggard face the result of excessive toil, or the product of enfeebled health? This problem was solved by the old mother in a score of different ways. But the next day, Caroline divined at once that the wrinkled brow bore signs of long-continued mental suffering. The slightly hollowed cheeks of the stranger bore an imprint of that seal with which misfortune marks its vassals, as if to leave them the consolation of recognizing one another with fraternal eye, and uniting together to resist it.

The warmth of the weather happened at this moment to be so great, and the stranger was so absent-minded, that he omitted to put on his hat while passing through the unhealthy street. Caroline then noticed the stern aspect given to the face by the cut of the hair, which stood up from his forehead like a brush. Though the girl's eyes were first brightened by innocent curiosity, they took a tender expression of sympathy and pity as the stranger passed on, like the last mourner in a funeral procession.

The strong, but not pleasing, impression felt by Caroline at the sight of this man resembled none of the sensations which the other habitual passers had

conveyed to her. For the first time in her life her compassion was aroused for another than her mother and herself. She made no reply to the fanciful conjectures which furnished food for the irritating loquacity of the old woman, but silently drew her long needle above and below the tulle in her frame; she regretted that she had not seen more of the unknown man, and waited until the morrow to make up her mind more decisively about him. For the first time, too, a passer beneath the window had suggested reflections to her mind. Usually she replied with a quiet smile to the various suppositions of her mother, who was always in hopes of finding a protector for her child among these strangers. If such ideas, imprudently expressed, awoke no evil thoughts in the girl's mind, we must attribute Caroline's indifference to the cruelly hard work which consumed the forces of her precious youth, and must infallibly change ere long the limpid light of her eyes and ravish from those fair cheeks the tender color which still brightened them.

For two whole months the "black monsieur" — such was the name they gave him — passed through the street almost daily, but capriciously as to time. The old woman often saw him at night when he had not passed in the morning; also he never returned at the fixed hours of other employees, who served as clocks to Madame Crochard, and never, since the first day when his glance had inspired the old mother with a sort of terror, had his eyes appeared to take notice of the picturesque group of the two female gnomes, — an indifference which piqued Madame Crochard who was not pleased to see her "black monsieur" gravely pre-

occupied, walking with his eyes on the ground or looking straight in front of him, as if he were trying to read the future in the damp mists of the rue du Tourniquet.

However, one morning toward the last of September, the pretty head of Caroline Crochard stood out so brilliantly on the dark background of her dingy chamber, and she looked so fresh among her spindling flowers and the sparse foliage that twined about the bars of the window, — the scene, in short, presented so many contrasts of light and shade, of white and rose, blending so well with the muslin the girl was embroidering and the tones of the old velvet chair in which she sat, — that the unknown pedestrian did look attentively at the effects of this living picture. Madame Crochard, weary of the indifference of her black gentleman, had, in truth, taken the step of making such a clatter with her reels and bobbins that the gloomy, thoughtful stranger was perhaps compelled by this unusual noise to look up at the window.

He exchanged one glance with Caroline, rapid, it is true, but in it their souls came slightly in contact, and they each were conscious of a presentiment that they should think of one another. That evening when the stranger returned, about four o'clock, Caroline distinguished the sound of his step upon the pavement, and when they looked at each other they did so with a species of premeditation; the eyes of the stranger were brightened with an expression of benevolence, and he smiled, while Caroline blushed. The old mother watched them both with a satisfied air.

After that memorable morning the black monsieur passed through the rue du Tourniquet twice every day, with a few exceptions which the two women noted; they judged, from the irregularity of his hours of return that he was neither so quickly released nor so strictly punctual as a subaltern clerk would be.

During the first three winter months Caroline and the stranger saw each other twice a day for the length of time which it took him to walk the distance flanked by the door and the three windows of the house. Daily this brief interview took on more and more a character of benevolent intimacy, until it ended in something that was almost fraternal. Caroline and the stranger seemed from the first to understand each other; and then, by dint of examining one another's faces a deeper knowledge of their characters came about. The meeting became a sort of visit which the stranger paid to Caroline; if, by chance, her black monsieur passed without giving her the half-formed smile on his eloquent lips or the friendly glance of his brown eyes, something was lacking to her day. She was like those old men to whom the reading of their newspaper becomes such a pleasure that if some accident delays it they are wholly upset at missing the printed sheet which helps them for an instant to cheat the void of their dreary existence.

These fugitive meetings soon had, both to Caroline and to the unknown man, the interest and charm of familiar conversation between friends. The young girl could no more conceal from the intelligent eye of her silent friend an anxiety, an illness, a sad thought, than he could hide from her the presence in

his mind of some painful preoccupation. "Something troubled him yesterday," was a thought that often came into the girl's heart as she noticed a strained look on the face of her black gentleman. "Oh! he must have been working too hard!" was another exclamation caused by other signs and shadows that Caroline had learned to distinguish.

The stranger, on his side, seemed to know when the girl had spent her Sunday in finishing a lace dress, in the design of which he felt an interest. He saw how the pretty face darkened as the rent-day came round; he knew when Caroline had been sitting up all night; but more especially did he notice how the sad thoughts now beginning to tarnish the freshness and the gayety of that young face were dissipated little by little as their unspoken acquaintance increased.

When winter dried the foliage and the tendrils of the puny garden, and the window was closed, a smile that was softly malicious came to the stranger's lips as he saw the bright light in the room casting Caroline's reflection through the panes. An evident parsimony as to fire, and the reddened noses of the two women, revealed to him the indigence of the little household; but if a pained compassion was reflected in his eyes, Caroline proudly undermined it with a feigned gayety.

But all this while the sentiments that were budding in their hearts were buried there, and no event happened to teach them the strength or the extent of their own feelings; they did not even know the sound of each other's voices. These two mute friends avoided a closer union as though it were an evil. Each seemed

to fear to bring upon the other a heavier misfortune than those they each were bearing. Was it the reticence of friendship that thus restrained them, or that dread of selfishness, that atrocious distrust which puts a barrier between all persons collected within the walls of a crowded city? Did the secret voice of their consciences warn them of coming peril? It is wholly impossible to explain the feeling which kept them enemies even more than friends, seemingly as indifferent to each other as they were, in truth, attached; as much united by instinct as they were parted by fact. Perhaps each was desirous of keeping both his and her illusion. It almost seemed as though this nameless black gentleman feared to hear from those fresh lips, pure as a flower, some vulgar speech, and that Caroline felt herself unworthy of that mysterious being who bore to her eyes the unmistakable signs of power and fortune.

As for Madame Crochard, that observant mother, half angry at her daughter's indecision, began to show a sulky face to her black monsieur, on whom she had hitherto smiled with an air as complacent as it was servile. Never did she bemoan herself to her daughter so bitterly at the hard fate which obliged her, at her age, to cook; never did her rheumatism and her catarrh draw from her so many moans. Her state of mind was such that she failed to do, that winter, the number of yards of tulle on which the poor household counted.

Under these circumstances and toward the end of December, when bread was becoming dearer and the poor were already feeling that rise in the cost of

grains which made the year 1816 so cruel to poverty, the unknown man observed on the face of the girl, whose name was unknown to him, the traces of some painful thought which her friendly smiles were unable to chase away. He recognized also in her eyes the weary indications of nocturnal labor. On one of the last nights of the month he returned, contrary to custom, through the rue du Tourniquet-Saint-Jean about one in the morning. The stillness of the hour enabled him to hear, even before he reached the house, the whining voice of the old woman, and the still more distressing tones of the girl, the sound of which mingled with the hissing sound of a fall of snow.

He walked slowly; then, at the risk of being arrested, he crouched before the window to listen to the mother and daughter, examining them through one of the many holes in the muslin curtains. A legal paper lay on the table which stood between their two work-frames, on which were the lamp and the globes of water. He recognized at once a summons of some kind. Madame Crochard was weeping bitterly, and the voice of the girl was guttural with her grief, completely changing its soft and caressing ring.

"Why make yourself so unhappy, mother? Monsieur Moulineux will never sell our furniture, and he cannot turn us out before I have finished this gown. Two nights more and I shall carry it to Madame Roguin."

"And she 'll make you wait for the money, as usual. Besides, the price of that gown won't pay the baker, too."

The spectator of this scene had so great a habit of

reading faces that he thought he saw as much hypocrisy in the mother's grief as there was truth in the daughter's. He disappeared at once; but presently returned. Again he looked through the ragged muslin. The mother had gone to bed. The girl was bending over her frame with indefatigable energy. On the table beside the summons lay a small piece of bread cut in a triangle, meant, no doubt to support her during the night, perhaps to sustain her courage. The black gentleman shuddered with pity and with pain; he flung his purse through a hole in the window that was covered with paper, in such a way that it fell at the girl's feet. Then, without waiting to see her surprise, he escaped, his heart beating, his cheeks on fire.

The next day the sad and alien man passed by as usual, affecting a preoccupied air. But he was not allowed to escape the girl's gratitude. Caroline had opened the window and was digging about the box of earth with a knife, a pretext of ingenuous falsity which proved to her benefactor that on this occasion she was determined not to see him through glass. With eyes full of tears she made a sign with her head as if to say, "I can only pay you with my heart."

But the black gentleman seemed not to understand the expression of this true gratitude. That evening, when he passed again, Caroline was busy in pasting another paper over the broken window and so was able to smile to him, showing the enamel of her brilliant teeth, like, as it were, a promise. From that day the black gentleman took another road, and appeared no more in the rue du Tourniquet.

During the first week of the following May, on a Saturday morning, as Caroline was watering her honeysuckle, she beheld between the two black lines of houses a narrow strip of cloudless sky, and called to her mother in the next room : —

"Mamma! let us go to-morrow for a day's pleasuring at Montmorency!"

The words had scarcely left her lips when the black monsieur passed, sadder and evidently more oppressed than ever. The look of pleasure which Caroline gave him might have passed for an invitation. In fact, the next day, when Madame Crochard, arrayed in a reddish-brown merino pelisse, a silk bonnet, and a striped shawl made to imitate cashmere, went with her daughter to choose a *coucou* at the corner of the rue d'Enghien and the rue du Faubourg-Saint-Denis, she found her black monsieur standing there, with the air of a man who was waiting for a woman.

A smile of pleasure softened the face of the stranger when he beheld Caroline, whose little feet, shod in puce-colored prunella boots, appeared beneath her white muslin gown, which, blown by the wind (too often perfidious to ill-made forms), showed off her beautiful figure, while her face, shaded by a straw hat lined with pink, seemed illuminated by a ray from heaven. A broad belt, also puce-colored, set off a little waist he might have spanned between his fingers; her hair, parted into two brown bandeaus round a forehead white as milk, gave her an air of simple purity which nothing marred. Pleasure seemed to make her as light as the straw of her hat; but a hope darted into her mind on seeing the black gentleman,

eclipsing all else. He himself appeared irresolute. Perhaps the sudden revelation of joy on the girl's face caused by his presence may have decided him, for he turned and hired a cabriolet, with a fairly good horse, to go to Saint-Leu-Taverny; then he asked Madame Crochard and her daughter to take seats in it.

The mother accepted without further urging; but no sooner had the vehicle fairly started than she brought forth scruples and regrets for the inconvenience that two women would cause to their companion.

"Perhaps monsieur would rather go alone to Saint-Leu?" she said hypocritically.

Presently she complained of the heat, and especially of her troublesome catarrh, which, she said, had kept her awake all night, and the carriage had hardly reached Saint-Denis before she was asleep, though certain of her snores seemed doubtful to the black monsieur, who frowned heavily and looked at the old woman with singular suspicion.

"Oh! she 's asleep," said Caroline, naïvely. "She coughed all night, and must be tired."

For all answer, the gentleman cast a shrewd smile upon the girl which seemed to mean: —

"Innocent creature! you don't know your mother."

However, in spite of his distrust, by the time the cabriolet was rolling along the avenue of poplars which leads to Eau Bonne, the black gentleman believed that Madame Crochard was really asleep; perhaps, however, he no longer cared to know whether the sleep was real or feigned. Whether it was that the beauty of the skies, the pure country air, and those delicious scents wafted by the budding poplars, the

willow catkins, the blossoms of the eglantine, had inclined his heart to open and expand; or that further silence became irksome to him; or that the sparkling eyes of the young girl were answering his, — it is certain that the black monsieur now began a conversation, as vague as the quivering of the foliage to the breeze, as vagabond as the circlings of a butterfly, as little without real motive as the voice, softly melodious, of the fields, but marked, like Nature herself, with mysterious love.

At this season the country quivers like a bride who has just put on her bridal robes; it invites to pleasure the coldest heart. To leave the darksome streets of the Marais for the first time since the previous autumn, and to find one's self suddenly in the bosom of that harmonious and picturesque valley of Montmorency; to pass through it in the morning when the eye can follow the infinity of its horizons, and to turn from that to an infinity of love in the eyes beside us, — what heart will continue icy, what lips will keep their secrets?

The unknown man found Caroline more gay than clever, more loving than informed. But if her laugh was a trifle giddy, her words bore evidence of true feeling; and when to the leading questions of her companion she replied with that effusion of the heart which the lower classes lavish, when they feel it, without the reticence of persons of good society, the face of the black gentleman brightened, and seemed, as it were, reborn; it lost by degrees the sadness that contracted its features, and gradually, tint by tint, it gained a look of youth and a character of beauty

which made the young girl proud and happy. She divined instinctively that her friend, deprived of tenderness and love, no longer believed in the devotion of women. At last a sudden gush of Caroline's light chatter carried off the last cloud which veiled on the stranger's face his real youth and his native character; he seemed to come to some eternal divorce from oppressive ideas, and he now displayed a vivacity of heart which the solemnity of his face had hitherto concealed. The talk became insensibly so familiar that by the time the carriage stopped at the first houses of the village of Saint-Leu Caroline was calling her friend "Monsieur Roger." Then, for the first time, Madame Crochard woke up.

"Caroline, she must have heard us," said Roger, suspiciously, in the young girl's ear.

Caroline answered by a charming smile of incredulity, which dispersed the dark cloud brought by the fear of a scheme to the forehead of the distrustful man. Without expressing any surprise, Madame Crochard approved of everything, and followed her daughter and Monsieur Roger to the park of Saint-Leu, where the pair had agreed to ramble about the smiling meadows and the balmy groves which the taste of Queen Hortense had rendered celebrated.

"Heavens! how lovely!" cried Caroline, when, having reached the green brow of the hill where the forest of Montmorency begins, she saw at her feet the vast valley winding its serpentine way dotted with villages, steeples, fields, and meadows, a murmur of which came softly to her ear like the purling of waves, as her eyes rested on the blue horizon of the distant hills.

The three excursionists followed the banks of an artificial river until they reached the Swiss valley with its chalet where Napoleon and Queen Hortense were wont to stay. When Caroline had seated herself with sacred respect upon the mossy wooden bench where kings and princesses and the Emperor had reposed themselves, Madame Crochard manifested a desire to take a closer view of a suspension bridge between two cliffs a little farther on. Wending her way to that rural curiosity she left her daughter to the care of Monsieur Roger, remarking, however, that she should not go out of sight.

"Poor little thing!" cried Roger, "have you never known comfort or luxury? Don't you sometimes wish to wear the pretty gowns you embroider?"

"I should n't be telling the truth, Monsieur Roger, if I said I never thought of the happiness rich people must enjoy. Yes, I do think often, specially when asleep, of the pleasure it would be to see my poor mother saved the trouble of going out to buy our food and then preparing it at her age. I would like to have a charwoman come in the morning before she is out of bed, and make her a cup of coffee with plenty of sugar, white sugar, in it. She likes to read novels, poor dear woman! Well, I 'd rather she used her eyes on her favorite reading than strain them counting bobbins from morning till night. Also, she really needs a little good wine. I do wish I could see her happy, she is so kind."

"Then she has always been kind to you?"

"Oh, yes!" said the girl, in an earnest voice.

As they watched Madame Crochard, who had reached

the middle of the bridge, and now shook her finger at them, Caroline continued: —

"Oh, yes! she has always been kind to me. What care she gave me when I was little! She sold her last forks and spoons to apprentice me to the old maid who taught me to embroider. And my poor father! she took such pains to make him happy in his last days!"

At this remembrance the girl shuddered, and put her hands before her eyes.

"Bah! don't let us think of past troubles," she resumed, gayly.

Then she colored, perceiving that Roger was much affected, but she dared not look at him.

"What did your father do?" asked Roger.

"He was a dancer at the Opera before the Revolution," she replied, with the simplest air in the world, "and my mother sang in the chorus. My father, who managed the evolutions on the stage, chanced to be present at the taking of the Bastille. He was recognized by some of the assailants, who asked him if he could n't lead a real attack as he had led so many sham ones at the theatre. Father was brave, and he agreed; he led the insurgents, and was rewarded with the rank of captain in the army of the Sambre-et-Meuse, where he behaved in such a way that he was rapidly promoted and became a colonel. But he was terribly wounded at Lutzen, and returned to Paris to die, after a year's illness. The Bourbons came back, and of course my mother could not get a pension, and we fell into such dreadful poverty that we had to work for our living. Of late the poor dear woman has been

ailing; and she is n't as resigned as she used to be; she complains, and I don't wonder, — she, who once had all the comforts of an easy life. As for me, I can't regret comforts I never had; but there 's one thing I do hope Heaven will grant me."

"What is that?" asked Roger, who seemed dreamy.

"That ladies will always wear embroidered gowns, so that I shall never want work."

The frankness of these avowals interested her hearer so much that when Madame Crochard slowly returned to them, he looked at her with an eye that was less hostile.

"Well, my children, have you had a good talk?" she asked, in a tone both indulgent and sly. "When one thinks, Monsieur Roger, that 'the little corporal' sat on that bench where you are sitting!" she continued, after a moment's silence. "Poor man! how my husband loved him! Ah! it is a good thing Crochard died; he never could have borne to think of him at that place where *those others* have put him."

Roger laid a finger on his lips, and the old woman, nodding her head, said, gravely: —

"Enough; I 'll keep a dead tongue in my head and my lips tight. But," she added, opening the front of her dress, and showing the cross of the Legion of honor and its red ribbon fastened to her throat with a black bow, "nothing can prevent me from wearing what *he* gave to my poor Crochard; I mean to be buried with it."

Hearing these words, which at that time were held to be seditious, Roger interrupted the old woman by rising abruptly, and they started to return to the vil-

lage through the park. The young man absented himself for a few moments to order a meal at the best restaurant, then he returned to fetch the two women, guiding them along the paths through the forest.

The dinner was gay. Roger was no longer that gloomy shadow which for months had passed through the rue du Tourniquet; no longer the "black monsieur," but rather a hopeful young man ready to let himself float upon the current of life like the two women who were happy in the day's enjoyment, though the morrow might find them without food. He seemed, indeed, to be under the influence of the joys of youth; his smile had something caressing and childlike about it. When, at five o'clock, the pleasant dinner came to an end with a few glasses of champagne, Roger was the first to propose that they should go to the village ball, under the chestnut-trees, where he and Caroline danced together. Their hands met in one thought, their hearts beat with the same hope, and beneath that azure sky, glowing toward the west with the level rays of the setting sun, their glances had a brilliancy which, to each other's heart, paled even that of the heaven above them. Strange power of a thought and a desire! nothing seemed impossible to these two beings. In such magic moments, when pleasure casts its reflections on the future, the soul can see naught but happiness. This charming day had created for both of them memories to which they could compare no other experience of their lives. Is the spring more perfect than the current, the desire more ravishing than its fulfilment? is the thing hoped-for more attractive than the thing possessed?

"There 's our day already over!"

At this exclamation which escaped the young man when the dance ended, Caroline looked at him compassionately, for she saw the sadness beginning again to cloud his face.

"Why are you not as happy in Paris as you have been here?" she said. "Is there no happiness except at Saint-Leu? It seems to me I can never again be discontented anywhere."

Roger quivered at those words, dictated by the soft abandonment which often leads women farther than they mean to go, — just as, on the other hand, prudery makes them stiffer than they really are. For the first time since that look which began their intimacy, Caroline and Roger had one and the same thought. Though they did not express it, they each felt it by a mutual impression something like that of the warmth of a glowing hearth beneficently comforting in winter. Then, as if they feared their silence, they hastened to the place where their vehicle awaited them. But before they reached it they took each other by the hand and ran along a wood-path in advance of Madame Crochard. When the white of the old woman's tulle cap was no longer visible through the foliage, Roger turned to the girl and said, with a troubled voice and a beating heart: —

"Caroline?"

The girl, confused, stepped back a few paces, understanding the desires that interrogation implied; nevertheless she held out her hand, which was ardently kissed, though she quickly withdrew it, for at that moment her mother came in sight. Madame Crochard

pretended to have seen nothing, as if, remembering her stage experience, the scene was only an aside.

The history of Roger and Caroline does not continue in the rue du Tourniquet; to meet them again we must go to the very centre of modern Paris, where, among the newly built houses, there are found apartments which seem expressly made for the honeymoon of bridal couples. The paper and painting are as fresh as they; the decoration, like their love, is in its bloom; all is in harmony with young ideas and bounding desires. About the middle of the rue Taitbout, in a house where the copings were still white, the columns of the vestibule and the door unsoiled, the walls shining with that coquettish paint which our renewed relations with England brought into fashion, was a little apartment on the second floor, arranged by an architect as if he had foreseen the uses to which it would be put. A simple airy antechamber with a stucco wainscot gave entrance to a salon and a very small dining-room. The salon communicated with a pretty bedchamber, beyond which was a bathroom. The mantels were adorned with mirrors choicely framed. The doors were painted with arabesques in excellent taste, and the style of the cornices was pure. An amateur would have recognized, better there than elsewhere, that science of arrangement and decoration which distinguishes the work of our modern architects.

For the last month Caroline had occupied this pretty apartment, which was furnished by upholsterers under direction of the architect. A short description of the principal room will give an idea of the marvels this

apartment presented to Caroline's eyes when Roger brought her there.

Hangings of gray cloth enlivened by green silk trimmings covered the walls of the bedroom. The furniture, upholstered with pale-green cassimere, was of that light and graceful shape then coming into fashion. A bureau of native wood inlaid with some darker wood held the treasures of the trousseau; a secretary of the same, a bed with antique drapery, curtains of gray silk with green fringes, a bronze clock representing Cupid crowning Psyche, and a carpet with gothic designs on a reddish ground were the principal features of this place of delight. Opposite to a psyche mirror stood a charming toilet-table, in front of which sat the ex-embroidery girl, very impatient with the scientific labor of Plaisir, the famous coiffeur, who was dressing her hair.

"Do you expect to get it done to-day?" she was saying.

"Madame's hair is so long and thick," responded Plaisir.

Caroline could not help smiling. The flattery of the artistic hair-dresser reminded her, no doubt, of the passionate admiration expressed by her friend for the beautiful hair he idolized. When Plaisir had departed, Caroline's maid came to hold counsel with her mistress as to which dress was most likely to please Roger. It was then the beginning of September, 1816; a dress of green grenadine trimmed with chinchilla was finally chosen.

As soon as her toilet was over Caroline darted into the salon, opened a window looking upon the street,

and went out upon the elegant little balcony which adorned the façade of the house; there she folded her arms on the railing in a charming attitude, not taken to excite the admiration of the passers who frequently turned to look at her, but to fix her eyes on the boulevard at the end of the rue Taitbout. This glimpse, which might be compared to the hole in a stage-curtain through which the actors see the audience, enabled her to watch the multitude of elegant carriages and the crowds of people carried past that one spot like the rapid slide of a magic lantern. Uncertain whether Roger would come on foot or in a carriage, the former lodger in the rue du Tourniquet examined in turn the pedestrians and the tilburys, a light style of phaeton recently brought to France by the English. Expressions of love and mutinous provocation crossed her face when, after watching for half an hour, neither heart nor sight had shown her the person for whom she waited. What contempt, what indifference was on her pretty face for all the other beings who were hurrying along like ants beneath her! Her gray eyes, sparkling with mischief, were dazzling. Wholly absorbed in her passion, she avoided the admiration of others with as much care as some women take to obtain it; and she troubled herself not at all as to whether a remembrance of her white figure leaning on the balcony should or should not disappear on the morrow from the minds of the passers who were now admiring her; she saw but one form, and she had in her head but one idea.

When the dappled head of a certain horse turned from the boulevard into the street, Caroline quivered and stood on tiptoe, trying to recognize the white

reins and the color of the tilbury. Yes, it was he! Roger, as he turned the corner, looked toward the balcony and whipped his horse and soon reached the bronze door, with which the animal was now as familiar as its master. The door of the apartment was opened by the maid, who had heard her mistress's cry of pleasure. Roger rushed into the salon, took Caroline in his arms, and kissed her with that effusion of feeling which accompanies the rare meetings of two creatures who love each other. Then they sat down together on a sofa before the fire, and silently looked at one another, — expressing their happiness only by the close grasp of their hands, and communicating their thoughts through their eyes.

"Yes, it is he!" she said at last. "Yes, it is you! Do you know that it is three whole days since I last saw you? — an age! But what is the matter? I know you have some trouble on your mind."

"My poor Caroline — "

"Oh, nonsense! poor Caroline — "

"Don't laugh, my angel; we can't go to-night to the Feydeau."

Caroline made a face of discontent, which faded instantly.

"How silly of me! why should I care about the theatre when I have you here. To see you! is n't that the only play I care for?" she cried, passing her hand through his hair.

"I am obliged to dine with the attorney-general. We have a most troublesome affair on hand. He met me in the great hall of the Palais; and as I open the case, he asked me to dinner that we might talk it

over previously. But, my darling, you can take your mother to the Feydeau and I 'll join you there, if the conference ends early."

"Go to the theatre without you!" she cried, with an expression of astonishment; "enjoy a pleasure you can't share! Oh, Roger, you don't deserve to be kissed," she added, throwing her arm round his neck with a motion as naïve as it was seductive.

"Caroline, I must go now, for I have to dress, and it takes so long to reach the Marais; besides, I have business that must be finished before dinner."

"Monsieur," said Caroline, "take care what you say! My mother assures me that when men begin to talk to us of business that means they no longer love us."

"But, Caroline, I did come as I promised; I snatched this hour from my pitiless — "

"Oh, hush!" she said, putting her finger on his lips; "hush! don't you see that I was joking?"

At this moment Roger's eye lighted on an article of furniture brought that morning by the upholsterer, — the old rosewood embroidery-frame the product of which supported Caroline and her mother when they lived in the rue du Tourniquet-Saint-Jean, — which had just been "done-up" like new, and on it a very beautiful tulle dress was already stretched.

"Yes, look at it, dear friend! I shall work to-night; and while I work I shall be thinking of those first days and weeks and months when you passed me without a word — but not without a look! those days when the memory of a look kept me awake at night. Oh! my dear frame, the handsomest bit of furniture

in the room, though you did not give it to me. Ah! you don't know!" she continued, seating herself on Roger's knee. "Listen! I want to give to the poor all I can now earn by embroidery. You have made me so rich, I want for nothing. How I love that dear property of Bellefeuille! less for what it is, however, than because you gave it to me. But tell me, Roger; I should like to call myself Caroline de Bellefeuille; can I? you ought to know. Is it legal or allowable?"

Seeing the little nod of affirmation to which Roger was led by his hatred for the name of Crochard, Caroline danced lightly about the room, clapping her hands together.

"It seems to me," she cried, "that I shall belong to you more in that way. Generally a girl gives up her own name and takes that of her husband."

An importunate idea, which she drove away instantly, made her blush. She took Roger by the hand and led him to the piano.

"Listen," she said. "I know my sonata now like an angel."

So saying, her fingers ran over the ivory keys, but a strong arm caught her round the waist and lifted her.

"Caroline, I ought to be far away by this time."

"You must go? Well, go, then," she said, pouting.

But she smiled as she looked at the clock, and cried out, joyously: —

"At any rate, I have kept you a quarter of an hour more."

"Adieu, Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille," he said, with the gentle mockery of love.

She took a kiss and led him to the door. When the

sound of his steps was no longer to be heard on the staircase she ran to the balcony to see him get into his tilbury, pick up the reins, and send her a last look. Then she listened to the roll of the wheels along the street, and followed with her eyes the mettlesome horse, the hat of the master, the gold lace on the groom's livery, and even looked long at the corner of the street which parted her from that vision of her heart.

Five years after the installation of Mademoiselle Caroline de Bellefeuille in the pretty apartment in the rue Taitbout, another domestic scene was happening there which tightened still further the bonds of affection between the two beings who loved each other.

In the middle of the blue salon and in front of the window that opened on the balcony, a little boy about four and a half years old was making an infernal racket by whipping and urging his rocking-horse, which was going at a pace that did not please him. The curls of his pretty blond head were falling in disorder on his collarette, and he smiled like an angel at his mother when she called to him from her sofa:

"Not so much noise, Charles; you 'll wake your little sister."

At that the inquiring boy jumped hastily from his horse and came on tiptoe, as if he feared to make a sound on the carpet; then, with a finger between his little teeth, he stood in one of those infantine attitudes which have so much grace because they are natural, and gently lifted the white muslin veil that hid the rosy face of a baby asleep on its mother's knee.

"Is she really asleep?" he said, much surprised. "Why does Eugénie sleep when we are all awake?" he inquired, opening wide his great black eyes which floated in liquid light.

"God only knows that," replied Caroline, smiling.

Mother and son gazed at the little girl baptized that morning. Caroline, now about twenty-four years old, had developed a beauty which happiness unalloyed and constant pleasure had brought into bloom. In her, the woman was now complete. Happy in obeying all the wishes of her dear Roger, she had by degrees acquired the accomplishments in which she was formerly lacking. She could play quite well on the piano, and sang agreeably. Ignorant of the usages of society (which would have repulsed her, and where she would not have gone had it even desired her, for a happy woman does not seek the world), she had not learned how to assume the social elegance of manner nor how to maintain the conversation teeming with words and empty of thought which passes current in the world. But, on the other hand, she had laboriously obtained the knowledge and the accomplishments necessary to a mother whose ambition lies in bringing up her children properly.

Never to part from her son; to give him from his cradle those lessons of every hour which imprint upon the youthful soul a love of goodness and of beauty, to preserve him from all evil influences, to fulfil the wearisome functions of a nurse and the tender obligations of a mother, — such were her pleasures. From the very first day of her love the discreet and gentle creature resigned herself so thoroughly to make no

step beyond the enchanted sphere in which she found her joys, that after six years of the tenderest union she knew her friend only by the name of Roger. In her bedroom an engraving of Psyche coming with her lamp to look at Cupid, though forbidden by the god to do so, reminded her of the conditions of her happiness.

During these six years no ill-placed ambition on her part wearied Roger's heart, a treasure-house of kindness. Never did she wish for display, for diamonds, for toilets; she refused the luxury of a carriage offered a score of times to her vanity. To watch on the balcony for Roger's cabriolet, to go with him to the theatre, to ramble with him in fine weather in the country about Paris, to hope for him, to see him, to hope for him again, — that was the story of her life, poor in events, rich in affection.

While rocking to sleep with a song the baby, a girl, born a few months before the day of which we speak, she pleased herself by evoking her memories of the past. The period she liked best to dwell on was the month of September in every year, when Roger took her to Bellefeuille to enjoy the country at that season. Nature is then as prodigal of fruit as of flowers; the evenings are warm, the mornings soft, and the sparkle of summer still keeps at bay the melancholy ghost of autumn.

During the first period of their love Caroline attributed the calm equability of soul and the gentleness of which Roger gave her so many proofs to the rarity of their meetings, always longed for, and to their manner of life, which did not keep them perpetually in each other's presence, as with husband and wife. She

recalled with delight how, during their first stay on the beautiful little property in the Gâtinais, tormented by a vague fear, she watched him. Useless espial of love! Each of those joyful months passed like a dream in the bosom of a happiness that proved unchangeable. She had never seen that kind and tender being without a smile on his lips, — a smile that seemed the echo of her own. Sometimes these pictures too vividly evoked brought tears to her eyes; she fancied she did not love him enough, and was tempted to see in her equivocal situation a sort of tax levied by fate upon her love.

At other times an invincible curiosity led her to wonder for the millionth time what events they were which could have driven so loving a man as Roger to find his happiness in ways that were clandestine and illegal. She invented a score of romances, chiefly to escape admitting the real reason, long since divined, though her heart refused to believe in it.

She now rose, still holding her sleeping child in her arms, and went into the dining-room to superintend the arrangements of the table for dinner. The day was the 6th of May, 1822, the anniversary of their excursion to the park of Saint-Leu, when her life was decided; during every succeeding year that day had been kept as a festival of the heart. Caroline now selected the linen and ordered the arrangement of the dessert. Having thus taken the pains which she knew would please Roger, she laid the baby in its pretty cradle and took up her station on the balcony to watch for the useful cabriolet which had now replaced the elegant tilbury of former years.

After receiving the first onset of Caroline's caresses and those of the lively urchin who called him "papa," Roger went to the cradle, looked at his sleeping daughter, kissed her forehead, and drew from his pocket a long paper, covered with black lines.

"Caroline," he said, "here 's the dowry of Mademoiselle Eugénie de Bellefeuille."

The mother took the paper (a certificate of investment on the Grand-livre) gratefully.

"Why three thousand francs a year to Eugénie, when you only gave fifteen hundred a year to Charles?" she asked.

"Charles, my angel, will be a man," he answered. "Fifteen hundred francs will suffice to support him. With that income a man of energy is above want. If, by chance, your son should be a nullity, I do not wish to give him enough to make him dissipated. If he has ambition, that small amount of property will inspire him with a love of work, and it will also enable to work. Eugénie is a woman, and must be provided for."

The father began to play with Charles, whose lively demonstrations were proofs of the independence and liberty in which he was being educated. No fear between child and father destroyed that charm which compensates paternity for its heavy responsibilities; the gayety of the little family was as sweet as it was genuine. That evening a magic lantern was produced which cast upon a white sheet mysterious scenes and pictures to the great amazement of the boy. More than once the raptures of the innocent little fellow excited the wild laughter of his father and mother.

Later, when the child had gone to bed, the baby woke, demanding its legitimate nourishment. By the light of the lamp, beside the hearth, in that chamber of peace and pleasure, Roger abandoned himself to the happiness of contemplating the picture of Caroline with her infant at her breast, white and fresh as a lily when it blooms, her beautiful brown hair falling in such masses of curls as almost to hide her throat. The light, as it fell, brought out the charms of this young mother, — multiplying upon her and about her, on her clothes and on her infant, those picturesque effects which are produced by combinations of light and shade. The face of the calm and silent woman seemed sweeter than ever before to Roger, who looked with tender eyes at the red and curving lips from which no bitter or discordant word had ever issued. The same love shone in Caroline's own eyes as she examined Roger furtively, either to enjoy the effect she was producing, or to know if she might keep him that evening.

Roger, who saw that meaning in her glance, said, with feigned regret: —

"I must soon be going. I have important business to attend to; they expect me at home. Duty first; is n't that so, my darling?"

Caroline watched him with a sad and gentle look, which did not leave him ignorant of the pain of her sacrifice.

"Adieu, then," she said. "Go now! If you stay an hour longer perhaps I shall not then be able to let you go."

"My angel," he said, smiling, "I have three days'

leave of absence, and I am supposed to be at this moment twenty leagues from Paris."

A few days after this anniversary of the 6th of May, Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille was hurrying one morning to the rue Saint-Louis in the Marais, hoping not to arrive too late at a house where she usually went regularly once a week. A messenger had been sent to tell her that her mother, Madame Crochard, was dying from a complication of ills brought on by catarrh and rheumatism.

While Caroline was still on the way, certain scrupulous old women with whom Madame Crochard had made friends for the last few years, introduced a priest into the clean and comfortable apartment of the old mother on the second floor of the house. Madame Crochard's servant was ignorant that the pretty young lady with whom her mistress often dined was the old woman's daughter. She was the first to propose calling in a confessor, hoping, secretly, that the priest would be of as much use to her as to the sick woman.

Between two games of cards, or while walking together in the Jardin Turc, the old women with whom Madame Crochard gossiped daily had contrived to instil into the hardened heart of their friend certain scruples as to her past life, a few ideas of the future, a few fears on the subject of hell, and certain hopes of pardon based on a sincere return to the duties of religion. Consequently, during this solemn morning three old dames from the rue Saint-François and the rue Vieille-du-Temple established themselves in the salon where Madame Crochard was in the habit of receiving them every Tuesday. They each took turns

to keep the poor old creature company and give her those false hopes with which the sick are usually deluded.

It was not until the crisis seemed approaching and the doctor, called in the night before, refused to answer for the patient's life, that the three old women consulted one another to decide if it were necessary to notify Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille. Françoise, the maid, was finally instructed to send a messenger to the rue Taitbout to inform the young relation whose influence was feared by the four old women, each of whom devoutly hoped that the man might return too late with the person on whom Madame Crochard had seemed to set a great affection. The latter, rich to their minds, and spending at least three thousand francs a year, was courted and cared for by the female trio solely because none of these good friends, nor even Françoise herself, knew of her having any heirs. The opulence in which her young relation Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille lived (Madame Crochard refrained from calling Caroline her daughter, according to a well-known custom of the Opera of her day) seemed to justify their scheme of sharing the property of the dying woman among themselves.

Presently one of the three crones, who was watching the patient, put her shaking head into the room where the other two were waiting, and said: —

"It is time to send for the Abbé Fontanon. In two hours from now she will be unconscious, and could n't sign her name."

Old Françoise departed immediately, and soon returned with a man in a black coat. A narrow fore-

head bespoke a narrow mind in this priest, whose face was of the commonest, — his heavy, hanging cheeks, his double chin, showing plainly enough a comfort-loving egotist. His powdered hair gave him a speciously mild appearance until he raised his small brown eyes, which were very prominent, and would have been in their proper place beneath the brows of a Kalmuc Tartar.

"Monsieur l'abbé," Françoise was saying to him, "I thank you for your advice, but you must please to remember the care I have taken of this dear woman — "

Here she suddenly paused, observing that the door of the apartment was open and that the most insinuating of the three crones was standing on the landing to be the first to speak with the confessor.

When the ecclesiastic had graciously received the triple broadside of the three pious and devoted friends of the widow he went into the latter's chamber and sat down by her bedside. Decency and a certain sense of propriety forced the three ladies and old Françoise to remain in the adjoining room, where they assumed looks of grief and mourning, which none but wrinkled old faces like theirs can mimic to perfection.

"Ah! but have n't I been unlucky?" cried Françoise, with a sigh. "This is the fourth mistress I 've had the grief to bury. The first left me an annuity of a hundred francs, the second a hundred and fifty, the third a sum down of three thousand. After thirty years' service that 's all I 've got!"

The servant presently used her right of going and

coming to slip into a little closet where she could overhear the priest's words.

"I see with pleasure," said Fontanon, "that your feelings, my daughter, are those of true piety. You are wearing, I see, some holy relic."

Madame Crochard made a vague movement which showed perhaps that she was not wholly in her right mind, for she dragged out the imperial cross of the Legion of honor.

The abbé rolled back his chair on beholding the effigy of the emperor. But he soon drew closer to his penitent, who talked to him in so low a voice that for a time Françoise could hear nothing.

"A curse upon me!" cried the old woman suddenly, in a louder voice. "Don't abandon me, monsieur l'abbé. Do you really think I shall have to answer for my daughter's soul?"

The priest spoke in so low a voice that Françoise could not hear him through the partition.

"Alas!" cried the widow, shrilly, "the wretch has given me nothing that I can will to any one. When he took my poor Caroline, he separated her from me, and gave me only three thousand francs a year, the capital of which is to go to my daughter."

"Madame has a daughter, and only an annuity!" cried Françoise, hastening into the salon.

The three old women looked at each other in amazement. The one whose chin and nose were nearest together (thus revealing a certain superior hypocrisy and shrewdness) winked at the other two, and as soon as Françoise had turned her back she made them a sign which meant, 'She 's a sly one; she has got herself down on three wills already."

The three old women remained therefore where they were. But the abbé presently joined them, and after they had heard what he had to say, they hurried like witches down the stairs and out of the house, leaving Françoise alone with her mistress.

Madame Crochard, whose sufferings were increasing cruelly, rang in vain for her maid, who was busy in making a search among the old woman's receptacles, and contented herself by calling out from time to time: —

"Yes, yes! I'm coming! — presently!"

The doors of the closets and wardrobes were heard to open and shut, as if Françoise were looking for some lottery-ticket or bank-note hidden among their contents. At this moment, when the crisis was impending, Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille arrived.

"Oh! my dear mother," she cried, "how criminal I am not to have got here sooner! You suffer, and I did not know it! my heart never told me you were in pain! But here I am now — "

"Caroline."

"Yes."

"They brought me a priest."

"A doctor is what you want," cried Caroline. "Françoise, fetch a doctor. How could those ladies neglect to have a doctor?"

"They brought me a priest," reiterated Madame Crochard, with a sigh.

"How she suffers! and not a thing to give her; no quieting medicine, nothing!"

The mother made an instinct sign; but Caroline's intelligent eye saw what was meant; she was instantly silent herself that her mother might speak.

"They brought me a priest," said the old woman for the third time, "on pretence of confessing me. Beware for yourself, Caroline," she cried out painfully, making a last effort; "the priest dragged out of me the name of your protector."

"How did you know it, my poor mother?" The old woman died while striving to look satirically at her daughter. If Caroline had observed her mother's face at that moment she would have seen what no one will ever see, namely, — Death laughing.

To understand the secrets underlying this introduction to our present Scene, we must for a time forget these personages and turn back to the story of anterior events. The conclusion of that story will be seen to be connected with the death of Madame Crochard. These two parts will then form one history, which, by a law peculiar to Parisian life, had produced two distinct and separate lines of action.

II.

THE FIRST LIFE.

TOWARD the close of November, 1805, a young lawyer, then about twenty-six years of age, was coming down the grand staircase of the mansion occupied by the arch-chancellor of the Empire, about three in the morning. When he reached the court-yard in his evening dress and saw a thin coating of ice, he gave an exclamation of dismay, through which, however, shone that sense of amusement which seldom deserts a Frenchman. Looking about him he saw no hackney-coaches, and heard in the distance none of those familiar sounds produced by the wooden shoes of Parisian coachmen and their gruff voices. The trampling of a few horses were heard in the court-yard, among them those of the chief-justice, whom the young man had just seen playing cards with Cambacérès. Suddenly he felt the friendly clap of a hand upon his shoulder; looking round, he beheld the chief-justice and bowed to him.

As the footman was letting down the steps of his carriage, the former legislator of the Convention had observed the young man's predicament.

"All cats are gray at night," he said, gayly. "The chief-justice won't compromise himself if he does take a barrister to his lodgings. Especially," he

added, "if the said barrister is the nephew of an old colleague, and one of the lights of that great Council of State which gave the Code Napoléon to France."

The young man got into the carriage, obeying an imperative sign from the chief law officer of imperial justice.

"Where do you live?" asked the minister, while the footman awaited the order before he closed the door.

"Quai des Augustins, monseigneur."

The horses started, and the young lawyer found himself *tête à tête* with the minister, whom he had vainly endeavored to speak with both during and after the sumptuous dinner of Cambacérès; it was evident to his mind that the chief-justice had taken pains to avoid him during the whole evening.

"Well, Monsieur de Granville, it seems to me that you are on the right road now —"

"So long as I am seated by your Excellency —"

"I 'm not joking," said the minister. "You were called to the bar two years ago, and since then your defence in the Simeuse and the Hauteserre trials have placed you very high."

"I have thought, until now, that my devotion to those unfortunate *émigrés* did me an injury."

"You are very young," said the minister, gravely. "But," he added, after a pause, "you pleased the arch-chancellor to-night. Enter the magistracy of the bar; we back the right men there. The nephew of a man for whom Cambacérès and I feel the deepest interest ought not to remain a mere pleader for want of influence. Your uncle helped us to come safely through a stormy period, and such services must not be forgotten."

The minister was silent for a moment. "Before long," he resumed, "I shall have three places vacant, in the Lower court and in the Imperial court of Paris; come and see me then, and choose the one that suits you. Until then, work hard; but do not come to my court. In the first place, I am overrun with work; and in the next, your rivals will guess your intentions and try to injure you. Cambacérès and I, by saying not one word to you to-night, were protecting you from the dangers of favoritism."

As the minister ended these words the carriage drew up on the Quai des Augustins. The young barrister thanked his generous protector with effusive warmth of heart, and rapped loudly on the door, for the keen north wind blew about his calves with wintry rigor. Presently an old porter drew the cord, and, as the young man entered, he called to him in a wheezy voice: —

"Monsieur, here 's a letter for you."

The young man took it, and tried, in spite of the cold, to read the writing by the paling gleam of a street-lamp.

"It is from my father!" he exclaimed, taking his candlestick from the porter. He then ran rapidly up to his room and read the following letter: —

"Take the mail coach, and, if you get here promptly, your fortune is made. Mademoiselle Angélique Bontems has lost her sister; she is now the only child, and we know that she does not hate you. Madame Bontems will probably leave her forty thousand francs a year in addition to her dowry. I have prepared your

way. Our friends may be surprised to see a noble family like ours ally itself with the Bontems. It is true that old Bontems was a *bonnet rouge* of the deepest dye, who got possession of a vast amount of the national property for almost nothing. But in the first place, what he got was the property of monks who will never return, and in the next, inasmuch as you have already derogated from our station in making yourself a barrister, I don't see why we should shrink from making another concession to modern ideas. The girl will have three hundred thousand francs, and I will give you one hundred thousand; your mother's property is worth a hundred and fifty thousand more, or nearly that. Therefore, my dear son, if you are willing to enter the magistracy, I see you in a fair way to become a senator like the rest of them. My brother-in-law, the councillor of State, will not lend a hand for that, I know, but as he is not married, his property will be yours some day. In reaching that position you perch high enough to watch events.

"Adieu; I embrace you."

Young de Granville went to bed with his head full of projects, each one more delightful than the last. Powerfully protected by Cambacérès, the chief-justice, and his maternal uncle, who was one of the constructors of the Code, he was about to begin his career in an enviable position before the leading court of France and a member of that bar from which Napoleon was selecting the highest functionaries of his empire. And now, in addition to these prospects, came that of a

fortune sufficiently brilliant to enable him to sustain his rank, to which the puny revenue of five thousand francs which he derived from an estate left him by his mother would not have sufficed.

To complete his dreams of ambition came those of personal happiness; he evoked the naïve face of Mademoiselle Angélique Bontems, the companion of his childish plays. So long as he remained a mere child his father and mother had not opposed his intimacy with the pretty daughter of their country neighbor; but when, during his short visits to Bayeux at the time of his college vacations, his parents, bigoted aristocrats, noticed his affection for the young girl, they forbade him to think of her. For ten years past young Granville had seldom seen his former companion, whom he called his "little wife." On the few occasions when the young pair had managed to evade the watchfulness of their families, they had scarcely done more than exchange a few words as they passed in the street or sat near each other in church. Their fortunate days were those when they met at some rural fête, called in Normandy an "assembly," when they were able to watch each other furtively. During his last vacation, Granville had seen Angélique twice; and the lowered eyes and dejected look of his "little wife" made him think she was oppressed by some secret despotism.

The morning after receiving his father's letter, the young lawyer appeared at the coach office in the rue Notre-Dame des Victoires, by seven o'clock, and was lucky enough to get a seat in the diligence then starting for Caen.

It was not without deep emotion that the new barrister beheld the towers of the cathedral of Bayeux. No hope of his life had yet been disappointed; his heart was opening to all the noblest sentiments which stir the youthful mind. After an over-long banquet of welcome with his father and a few old friends, the impatient young man was taken to a certain house in the rue Teinture, already well-known to him. His heart beat violently as his father — who was still called in Bayeux the Comte de Granville — rapped loudly at a porte-cochère, the green paint of which was peeling off in scales.

It was four in the afternoon. A young servant-girl, wearing a cotton cap, saluted the gentlemen with a bob courtesy, and replied that the ladies were at vespers, but would soon be home. The count and his son were shown into a lower room which served as a salon and looked like the parlor of a convent. Panels of polished walnut darkened the room, around which a few chairs covered with tapestry were symmetrically placed. The sole ornament of the stone chimney-piece was a green-hued mirror, from either side of which projected the twisted arms of those old-fashioned candelabra made at the time of the Peace of Utrecht. On the panelled wall opposite to the fireplace young Granville saw an enormous crucifix of ebony and ivory weathed with consecrated box.

Though lighted by three windows, which looked upon a provincial garden of symmetrical square beds outlined with box, the room was so dark that it was difficult to distinguish on the wall opposite to the windows three church pictures, the work of some learned artist,

and bought, during the Revolution no doubt, by old Bontems, who, in his capacity as head of the district, did not forget his own interests.

From the carefully waxed floor to the curtains of green checked linen everything shone with monastic cleanliness. The heart of the young man was chilled involuntarily by this silent retreat in which Angélique lived. His recent experience of the brilliant salons of Paris in the vortex of continual fêtes had easily effaced from his mind the dull and placid life of the provinces; the contrast was now so abruptly presented that he was conscious of a species of inward repugnance. To come from a reception at Cambacérès, where life was so ample, where intellects had breadth and compass, where the imperial glory was so vividly reflected, and to fall suddenly into a circle of mean ideas was like being transported from Italy to Greenland.

"To live here! why, it is not living," he said inwardly, as he looked round this salon of methodism.

The old count, who noted the surprise on his son's face, took his arm and led him to a window where there was still a little light, and while the woman lit the yellowed candles above the chimney-piece, he endeavored to disperse the clouds that this aspect of dulness gathered on the young man's brow.

"Listen, my boy," he said. "The widow of old Bontems is desperately pious, — when the devil gets old, you know! I see that the odor of sanctity is too much for you. Well, now, here 's the truth. The old woman is besieged by priests; they have persuaded her that she has still time to go straight to heaven;

and so, to make sure of Saint Peter and his keys, she buys them. She goes to mass every day, takes the sacrament every Sunday that God creates, and amuses herself by restoring chapels. She has given the cathedral so many ornaments, albs, and copes, she has bedizened the canopy with such loads of feathers that the last procession of the Fête-Dieu brought a greater crowd than a hanging, merely to see the priests so gorgeously dressed and all their utensils regilt. This house, my boy, is holy ground. But I 've managed to persuade the foolish old thing not to give those pictures you see there to the church; one is a Domenichino, the other two, Correggio and Andrea del Sarto, — worth a great deal of money."

"But Angélique?" asked the young man, eagerly.

"If you don't marry her Angélique is lost," replied the count. "Our good apostles keep advising her to be a virgin and martyr. I 've had a world of trouble to rouse her little heart by talking of you,— ever since she became an only child. But can't you see that, once married, you 'll take her to Paris, and once there fêtes, and marriage, and the theatre and the excitements of Parisian life will soon make her forget the confessionals and fasts, hair-shirts and masses on which these creatures feed?"

"But won't the fifty thousand francs a year derived from ecclesiastical property be given back?"

"Ah! there 's the rub," cried the count, with a knowing look. "In consideration of this marriage — for Madame Bontems' vanity is not a little tickled at the idea of grafting the Bontems on the genealogical tree of the Granvilles — the said mother gives her

fortune outright to her daughter, reserving to herself only a life-interest in it. Of course the clergy oppose the marriage; but I have had the banns published; all is ready; in a week you 'll be out of the claws of the old woman and her abbés. You 'll get the prettiest girl in Bayeux, — a little duck who 'll never give you any trouble, for she has principles. She has been mortified in the flesh, as they say in their jargon, by fasts and prayers, and," he added, in a low voice, "by her mother."

A rap discreetly given to the door silenced the count, who expected to see the two ladies enter. A young servant-lad with an air of important business entered, but, intimidated by the sight of two strangers, he made a sign to the woman, who went up to him. The lad wore a blue jacket with short tails which flapped about his hips, and blue and white striped trousers; his hair was cut round, and his face was that of a choir-boy, so expressive was it of that forced compunction which all the members of a *dévote* household acquire.

"Mademoiselle Gatienne, do you know where the books for the Office of the Virgin are? The ladies of the congregation of the Sacré-Cœur are to make a procession this evening in the church."

Gatienne went to fetch the books.

"Will it take long, my little friar?" asked the count.

"Oh! not more than half an hour."

"Suppose we go and see it; lots of pretty women," said the father to the son. "Besides, a visit to the cathedral won't do us any harm "

The young lawyer followed his father with an irresolute air.

"What 's the matter with you?" asked the count.

"Well, the fact is, father, that I — I — I think I am right."

"But you have n't yet said anything."

"True; but I have been thinking that having saved a part of your former fortune you will leave it to me some day, and a long day hence I hope. Now if you are willing to give me, as you say, a hundred thousand francs to make this marriage, which may be a foolish one, I 'd rather take fifty thousand to escape unhappiness and stay a bachelor. Even so I shall have a fortune equal to that which Mademoiselle Bontems will bring me."

"Are you crazy?"

"No, father. Here is what I mean. The chief-justice promised me two days ago an appointment at the Paris bar. Fifty thousand francs joined to what I now possess, together with the salary of the place, will give me an income of twelve thousand francs; and I should undoubtedly have opportunities of fortune far preferable to those of a marriage which may prove as poor in happiness as it is rich in means."

"I see plainly," said his father, laughing, "that you never lived under the *ancien régime*. Did we of that day ever trouble ourselves about our wives, I 'd like to know?"

"But, father, marriage has become in our day — "

"*Ah ça!*" said the count, interrupting his son, "then all is true that my old friends of the emigration used to tell me? Has the Revolution bequeathed us

nothing but life without gayety, infecting the youth of France with equivocal principles? Are you going to talk to me, like my brother-in-law the Jacobin, of the Nation, and public morality, and disinterestedness? Good heavens! without the Emperor's sisters what would become of us?"

The old man, still vigorous, whom the peasants on his property continued to call the Seigneur de Granville, concluded these words as they entered the cathedral. Disregarding the sanctity of the place, he hummed an air from the opera of "Rose et Colas" while taking the holy water; then he led his son along the lateral aisles, stopping at each column to examine the rows of heads, lined up like those of soldiers on parade.

The special office of the Sacré-Cœur was about to begin. The ladies belonging to that society had gathered near the choir; the count and his son moved on to that part of the nave and stood leaning against a column in the darkest corner, whence they could see the entire mass of heads, which bore some resemblance to a meadow studded with flowers.

Suddenly, within a few feet of young Granville, the sweetest voice he could conceive a human being to possess rose like the song of the first nightingale after a dreary winter. Though accompanied by other women's voices and the tones of the organ, that voice stirred his nerves as if they had been suddenly assailed by the too rich, too keen notes of an harmonica. The Parisian turned round and saw a young girl whose face, from the bowed attitude of the head, was completely hidden in a large bonnet of some white material. He

felt it was from her that this clear melody proceeded; he fancied that he recognized Angélique in spite of the brown pelisse which wrapped her figure, and he nudged his father's arm.

"Yes, that 's she," said the count, after looking in the direction his son had pointed out.

The old gentleman showed by a gesture the pale face of an elderly woman whose eyes, encircled by dark lines, had already taken note of the strangers, though her deceitful glance seemed never to have left her prayer-book.

Angélique raised her head toward the altar, as if to inhale the penetrating perfume of the incense, clouds of which were floating near the women. By the mysterious gleams cast from the tapers, the lamp of the nave, and a few wax-candles fastened to the columns, the young man saw a sight which shook his resolutions. A white silk bonnet framed a face of charming regularity, ending the oval by a bow of satin ribbon beneath the dimpled chin. Above a narrow but delicate forehead the pale gold hair was parted into bands which came down upon her cheeks like the shadow of foliage on a bunch of flowers. The arches of the eyebrows were drawn with the precision so much admired on beautiful Chinese faces. The nose, almost aquiline, possessed an unusual firmness of outline, and the lips were like two rosy lines traced by love's most delicate implement. The eyes, of a pale, clear blue, were expressive of purity.

Though Granville remarked a sort of rigid silence upon this charming face, he could readily assign it to the feelings of devotion that were then in the girl's

soul. The sacred words of the prayer passed from those rosy lips in a cloud, as it were, of perfume, which the cold of the church sent visibly into the atmosphere. Involuntarily, the young man bent forward to breathe that divine exhalation. The movement attracted the girl's attention, and her eyes, hitherto fixed on the altar, turned toward Granville. The dim light showed him to her indistinctly, but she recognized the companion of her childhood; a memory more powerful than prayer brought a vivid brilliancy to her face, and she blushed. The young man quivered with joy as the emotions of another life were visibly vanquished by emotions of love, and the solemnity of the sanctuary seemed eclipsed by earthly memories. But his triumph was soon over. Angélique lowered her veil, recovered a calm countenance, and began once more to sing without a thrill in her voice that showed the least emotion. But Granville found himself under the thraldom of a new desire, and all his ideas of prudence vanished.

By the time the service was over his impatience had become so great that without allowing the ladies to return home he went up at once to greet his "little wife." A recognition that was shy on both sides took place in the porch of the cathedral under the eyes of the faithful. Madame Bontems trembled with pride as she took the arm which the Comte de Granville, much provoked by his son's scarcely decent impatience, was forced to offer her before the eyes of all present.

During the fifteen days that now elapsed between the official presentation of the young Vicomte de Granville as the accepted suitor of Mademoiselle Angélique

Bontems and the solemn day of the marriage, the young man came assiduously to visit his love in the gloomy parlor, to which he grew accustomed. These long visits were partly made for the purpose of watching Angélique's nature; for Granville's prudence revived on the day after that first interview. He always found his future wife seated before a little table of Santa Lucia wood, employed in marking the linen of her trousseau. Angélique never spoke first of religion. If the young lawyer began to play with the beads of the handsome rosary which lay beside her in a crimson velvet bag, if he smiled as he looked at a relic which always accompanied that instrument of devotion, Angélique would take the chaplet gently from his hands, giving him a supplicating look; then, without a word, she replaced it in its bag and locked them up. If, occasionally (to test her), Granville risked some objecting remark against certain practices of religion, the pretty creature would listen to him with the settled smile of fixed conviction on her lips.

"We must either believe nothing, or believe all that the Church teaches," she replied. "Would you wish a girl without religion for the mother of your children? No. What man would dare to judge between God and the unbelievers? Can I blame what the Church enjoins?"

Angélique seemed so inspired by fervent charity, Granville saw her turn such penetrating and beseeching glances on him, that he was several times tempted to embrace her religion. The profound conviction she felt of walking in the true and only path awoke in the

heart of the future magistrate certain doubts of which she endeavored to make the most.

Granville then committed the enormous fault of mistaking the signs of an eager desire for those of love. Angélique was so pleased to unite the voice of her heart with that of her duty, in yielding to an inclination she had felt from childhood, that the young man, misled, did not distinguish which of the two voices was the stronger. Are not all young men primarily disposed to trust the promises of a pretty face, and to infer beauty of soul from beauty of feature? An indefinable feeling leads them to believe that moral perfection must coincide with physical perfection. If her religion had not permitted Angélique to yield to her feelings they would soon have dried up in her heart like a plant watered with an acid. Could a lover beloved become aware of the secret fanaticism of the girl's nature?

Such was the history of young Granville's feelings during this fortnight, devoured like a book whose dénouement is absorbing. Angélique, attentively studied, seemed to him the gentlest of womankind, and he even found himself giving thanks to Madame Bontems, who, by inculcating the principles of religion so strongly in her daughter, had trained her, as it were, to meet the trials of life.

On the day appointed for the signing of the marriage contract Madame Bontems made her son-in-law swear solemnly to respect the religious practices of her daughter, to allow her absolute liberty of conscience, to let her take the sacrament and go to church and to confession as often as she pleased, and never

to oppose her in her choice of a confessor. At this solemn moment Angélique looked at her future husband with so pure and innocent an air that Granville did not hesitate to take the required oath. A smile flickered on the lips of the Abbé Fontanon, the pallid priest who directed the consciences of the family. With a slight motion of her head, Mademoiselle Bontems promised her lover never to make an ill use of that liberty of conscience. As for the old count, he whistled under his breath, to the tune of "Va-t-en voir s'ils viennent."

After the proper number of days granted to the *retours de noces*, customary in the provinces, Granville returned with his wife to Paris, where the young lawyer was now appointed as substitute to perform the duties of attorney-general to the imperial court of the Seine. When the new couple began to look about them for a residence, Angélique employed the influence possessed by every woman during the honeymoon to induce Granville to take a large apartment on the ground-floor of a house which formed the corner of the rue Vieille-du-Temple and the rue Neuve-Saint-François. The principal reason for her choice was the fact that this house was close to the rue d'Orléans, in which was a church, and it was also near a small chapel in the rue Saint-Louis.

"A good housekeeper makes proper provision," said her husband, laughing.

Angélique begged him to observe that the Marais quarter was in the neighborhood of the Palais de Justice, and that the magistrates he had just called upon lived there. A large garden gave, for a young house-

hold, an additional value to the residence, — their children, "if heaven sent them any," could play there; the court-yard was spacious, and the stables were fine. Granville would much have preferred a house in the Chaussée-d'Antin, where everything was young and lively, where the fashions appear in all their novelty, where the neighboring population is elegant, and the distance less to theatres and other sources of amusement. But he found himself forced to yield to the persuasions of a young wife making her first request, and thus, solely to please her, he buried himself in the Marais.

Granville's new functions required an assiduous labor, all the more because they were new to him; he therefore gave his first thought to the furnishing of his study and the arrangement of his library, where he quickly installed himself in the midst of a mass of documents, leaving his young wife to direct the decoration of the rest of the house. He threw the responsibility of these purchases, usually a source of pleasure and tender recollection to young wives, the more willingly upon Angélique because he was ashamed of depriving her of his presence far more than the rules of the honeymoon permitted. But after he had thoroughly settled to his work, the young official allowed his wife to entice him out of his study and show him the effect of the furniture and decorations, which so far he had only seen piecemeal.

If it is true, as the adage says, that we may judge of a woman by the door of her house, the rooms of that house must reveal her mind with even more fidelity. Whether it was that Madame de Granville

had given her custom to tradesmen without any taste, or that her own nature was inscribed on the quantity of things ordered by her, certain it is that the young husband was astonished at the dreariness and cold solemnity that reigned in the new home. He saw nothing graceful; all was discord; no pleasure was granted to the eye. The spirit of formality and pettiness which characterized the parlor at Bayeux reappeared in the Parisian salon beneath ceilings and cornices decorated with commonplace arabesques, the long convoluted strands of which were in execrable taste.

With the desire to exonerate his wife, the young man retraced his steps and examined once more the long and lofty antechamber through which the apartment was entered. The color of the woodwork, chosen by his wife, was much too sombre; the dark-green velvet that covered the benches only added to the dulness of the room, — of no great importance, to be sure, except as it gave an idea of the rest of the house; just as we often judge of a man's mind by his first words. An antechamber is a species of preface which announces all, but pledges nothing. The young man asked himself if his wife could really have chosen the lamp in the form of an antique lantern which hung in the middle of this barren hall, that was paved with black and white marble and hung with a paper imitating blocks of stone with here and there green patches of simulated moss and lichen. A large but old barometer hung in the centre of one of the panels as if to make the barrenness of the place more visible.

The husband looked at his wife; he saw her so

satisfied with the red trimmings that edged the cotton curtains, so pleased with the barometer and the decent statue which adorned the top of a huge gothic stove, that he had not the barbarous courage to destroy those fond illusions. Instead of condemning his wife, Granville condemned himself; he blamed his neglect of his first duty, which was surely to guide the steps of a girl brought up in Bayeux and ignorant of Paris.

After this specimen, the reader can easily imagine the decoration of the other rooms. What could be expected of a young woman who took fright at the legs of a caryatide, and rejected with disgust a candelabrum or a bit of furniture if the nudity of an Egyptian torso appeared upon it. At this period the school of David had reached the apex of its fame; everything in France felt the influence of the correctness of his drawing and his love for antique forms, which made his painting, as one might say, a species of colored sculpture. But none of the inventions of imperial luxury obtained a place in Madame de Granville's home. The vast square salon retained the white paint and the faded gilding of the Louis XV. period, in which the architects were prodigal of those insufferable festoons due to the sterile fecundity of the designers of that epoch. If the slightest harmony had reigned, if the articles of furniture had taken, in modern mahogany, the twisted forms brought into fashion by the corrupted taste of Boucher, Angélique's house would merely have offered the odd contrast of young people living in the nineteenth century as if they belonged to the eighteenth; but no, — a mass of heterogeneous things produced the most ridiculous

anachronisms. The consoles, clocks, and candelabra represented warriors and their attributes, which the triumphs of the Empire had rendered dear to Paris. Greek helmets, Roman broad-swords, shields due to military enthusiasm which now decorated the most pacific articles of furniture were little in accordance with the delicate and prolix arabesques, the delight of Madame de Pompadour. Pietistic devotion carries with it a sort of wearisome humility, which does not exclude pride. Whether from modesty or natural inclination, Madame de Granville seemed to have a horror for light or gay colors. Perhaps she thought that brown and purple comported best with the dignity of a magistrate. How could a young girl accustomed to an austere life conceive of those luxurious sofas, those elegant and treacherous boudoirs where pleasures and dangers take their rise?

The poor magistrate was in despair. By the tone of approbation with which he echoed the praises which his wife was bestowing upon herself she perceived that she had not pleased him; and she showed such grief at her failure that the amorous Granville saw another proof of love for him in her excessive pain, instead of seeing what it really was, — a wound to her self-love. A young girl suddenly taken from the mediocrity of provincial ideas, unaccustomed to the coquetry and elegance of Parisian life, could she have done better? The young husband preferred to believe that the choice of his wife had been guided by her tradesmen, rather than admit to himself what was really the truth. Less loving, he would have felt that the dealers, quick to divine the thoughts of their customers, must have

blessed heaven for sending them a young *dévote* devoid of taste, who enabled them to get rid of things that were otherwise unsalable. As it was, he did his best to console his wife.

"Happiness, my dear Angélique, does n't depend on furniture that is more or less elegant; it depends on the sweetness and kindness and love of a woman."

"It is my duty to love you; and no duty can ever please me as much," replied Angélique, softly.

Nature has put into a woman's heart so great a desire to please, so great a need of love, that even in a bigoted young girl ideas of a future life and of working for salvation must succumb in some degree to the first joys of marriage. So that, since the month of April, the period at which they were married, until the beginning of the winter, the married pair had enjoyed a perfect union. Love and work have the virtue of making a man indifferent to external matters. Obliged to spend half the day at the Palais de Justice, required to debate the solemn interests of the life or fate of men, Granville was less likely than other husbands to see or know what went on within his own household. If on Fridays his table was served with a *maigre* dinner, if by chance he asked for a dish of meat without obtaining it, his wife, forbidden by the Gospels to tell a lie, contrived by various little deceptions (allowable in the interests of religion) to make her premeditated purpose appear like an act of forgetfulness or the result of an empty market; she excused herself often by throwing the blame upon her cook, and even went so far on one occasion as to scold him for it. At this period young

magistrates were not in the habit of keeping fasts, Ember-days, and vigils as they do in our time; Granville therefore did not at first notice the periodicity of his *maigre* meals, which his wife, moreover, took wily care to make extremely delicate by means of teal, wild-duck, and fish, the amphibious flesh of which, or the careful seasoning, deceived his taste.

Thus the young magistrate lived, without being aware of it, in an orthodox manner, and earned his salvation unknown to himself. On week-days he did not know if his wife went to church or not. On Sundays, by a very natural courtesy, he accompanied her to mass as if to reward her for occasionally sacrificing vespers to be with him; he therefore did not at first realize the rigidity of his wife's pious habits. Theatres being intolerable in summer on account of the heat, Granville had no occasion to ask his wife to go there; the serious question of theatre-going was, therefore, not mooted. In the first months of a marriage to which a man has been led by the beauty of a young girl, he is never exacting in his demands; youth is more eager than discriminating. How could he see the coldness, the reserve, the frigidity of a woman to whom he attributed a warmth of enthusiasm equal to his own? It is necessary to reach a certain conjugal tranquillity before perceiving that a true *dévote* accepts a man's love with her arms crossed. Granville, thus in the dark, regarded himself as sufficiently happy until a fatal event came to influence the future of his marriage.

In the month of September, 1808, the canon of the cathedral at Bayeux, who had formerly directed the

consciences of Madame Bontems and her daughter came to Paris, led by an ambition to obtain a post in one of the great churches, no doubt considering it as the stepping-stone to a bishopric. In recovering his former power over his lamb he shuddered, as he said, to find her already so changed by the air of Paris; and he set himself to the work of drawing her back to his chilly fold. Frightened by the remonstrances of the ex-canon, — a man about thirty-eight years old, who brought into the midst of the enlightened and tolerant clergy of Paris the harshness of provincial Catholicism, with its inflexible bigotry, whose manifold exactions are so many shackles to timid souls, — Madame de Granville repented of her sins and returned to her Jansenism.

It would be wearisome to describe, step by step, the incidents which led insensibly to unhappiness within the bosom of the Granville household; it will perhaps suffice to relate the principal facts without being scrupulous to give them their proper order and sequence. The first misunderstanding between the young couple was, however, sufficiently striking to be carefully related here.

When Granville wished to take his wife into society she never refused any staid receptions, or dinners, concerts, and assemblies at the houses of magistrates ranking above her husband in the judicial hierarchy; but she contrived, for a long time, under pretext of a headache or other illness, to avoid a ball. One day Granville, impatient at last with these wilful excuses, suppressed the written notice of a ball at the house of a councillor of State, and deceived his wife by a ver-

bal invitation. When the evening came her health was not in question, and he took her, for the first time, to a really magnificent fête.

"My dear," he said, after their return, observing her depressed air, which annoyed him, "your position as my wife, the rank to which you are entitled in society, and the fortune you enjoy, impose obligations upon you which you cannot escape. You ought to go with me into society, especially to large balls, and appear there in a suitable manner."

"But, my dear friend, what was there so unsuitable in my dress?"

"I did not refer to your dress, my dear, but to your manner. When a young man came up to speak to you, you grew so distant that a foolish observer might have thought that you feared for your virtue. You seemed to think that a smile would compromise you; you really appeared to be asking God to forgive the sins of the persons who surrounded you. The world, my dear angel, is not a convent. As you yourself have mentioned dress, I will also say that it is a duty in your position to follow the fashions and usages of society."

"Do you wish me to show my shape like those brazen women I saw last night, who wore their gowns so low that any one could plunge his immodest eyes on their bare shoulders and — "

"There 's a difference, my dear, between uncovering the whole bust and giving grace and charm to the figure," said the husband, interrupting the wife. "You wore three rows of tulle ruches swathing your neck up to your chin. You really seem to have begged

your dressmaker to destroy the grace of your shoulders and the outline of your bust with as much care as a coquettish woman puts into the choice of becoming garments. Your neck was buried under such innumerable pleats and folds that people laughed last night at your affected modesty. You would be horrified if I repeated to you the unpleasant things that were said of you."

"Those to whom such obscenities are pleasing will not be burdened by the weight of my sins," replied the young wife, dryly.

"You did not dance," said Granville.

"I shall never dance," she replied.

"But if I say that you ought to dance?" said the magistrate, hastily. "Yes, you ought to follow the fashions, wear flowers in your hair, and diamonds. Reflect, my dear, that rich people, and we are rich, are bound to maintain the luxury of a State. Is n't it better to keep the manufactories busy and prosperous than spend your money in alms, through the clergy?"

"You talk like a politician," said Angélique.

"And you like a churchman," he replied, sharply.

The discussion now became very bitter. Madame de Granville put into her answers, which were very gentle, and uttered in tones as clear as the tinkling of a bell, a stolid obstinacy which betrayed the sacerdotal influence. She claimed the rights which Granville's promise secured to her, and told him that her confessor had expressly forbidden her to go to balls. In reply Granville endeavored to prove to her that the priest was exceeding the rights of his office according to the regulations of the Church itself.

This odious dispute was renewed with far more violence and acrimony on both sides when Granville wished his wife to accompany him to the theatre. Finally the husband, for the sole purpose of breaking down the pernicious influence exercised by the confessor, brought the quarrel to such a pitch that Madame de Granville, driven to bay, wrote to the court of Rome to inquire whether a woman could, without losing her salvation, wear a low dress and go to the theatre to please her husband. An answer was promptly returned by the venerable Pius VII., who strongly condemned the wife's resistance and blamed the confessor. This letter, a true conjugal catechism, seemed as if it were dictated by the tender voice of Fénelon, whose grace and sweetness emanated from it. "A wife," it said, "is in her right place wherever her husband takes her." "If she commits a sin by his order, it is not she who will answer for that sin." These two passages in the pope's homily made Madame de Granville and her confessor accuse the pontiff of irreligion.

Before the letter arrived, Granville had discovered the strict observance of the ecclesiastical laws of fasting, which his wife now imposed upon him more openly; and he gave orders to the servants that he himself was to be served with meat daily. Notwithstanding the extreme displeasure which this order caused his wife, Granville, to whom feast or fast was of little real consequence, maintained it with virile firmness. The feeblest of thinking creatures is wounded in his inmost being when another will than his own imposes secretly a thing he would have done

of his own monition willingly. Of all tyrannies, the most odious is that which deprives the soul of the merit of its actions and its thoughts; the mind is made to abdicate without having reigned. The sweetest word to say, the tenderest feeling to express, die on our lips when we think they are compulsory.

Before long the young magistrate gave up receiving his friends either at dinner or in the evening; the house soon seemed to be one of mourning. A household which has a *dévote* for its mistress assumes a peculiar aspect. The servants under the eye of such a woman are chosen from among those self-called pious persons who have a physiognomy of their own. Just as a jovial youth entering the gendarmerie acquires the gendarme face, so domestic servants who are trained to the practice of devotion contract a uniform and peculiar countenance, a habit of lowering the eyes, of maintaining an attitude of compunction, a livery of cant, in short, which humbugs wear marvellously well.

Besides this, *dévotes* form among themselves a species of republic; they all know one another; their servants, whom they recommend within their own circle, are like a race apart, preserved by them as horse-breeders admit to their stables only such animals as possess a clear pedigree. The more a so-called unbeliever examines the home of a *dévote*, the more he finds that everything about it is stamped with an indescribable unpleasantness. He finds there the symptoms of avarice and mystery that characterize the house of a usurer; also that perfumed dampness of incense which makes the chilly atmosphere of chapels. The paltry rigor, the poverty of ideas which appear

in all things can only be expressed by the one word *bigotry*. In these repellent, implacable houses bigotry is painted on the walls, the furniture, in the pictures, the engravings; the talk is bigoted, the silence is bigoted, the faces are bigoted. The transformation of things and men into bigotry is an inexplicable mystery; but the fact exists. Every one must have observed that bigots do not walk, or sit down, or speak, as walk, sit, and speak the rest of the world: in their presence others are embarrassed; no one laughs; all things are rigid, stiff, uniform, from the cap of the mistress of the house to her pincushion with its even rows of pins; glances are not open or frank; the servants seem shadows; the lady of the house sits enthroned on ice.

One morning poor Granville became aware, with pain and sadness, of the symptoms of bigotry now established in his home. We find in the world certain social spheres where the same effects exist, though produced by other causes. Ennui draws around these unhappy homes a circlet of iron which encloses the horrors of the desert and the infinitude of the void. A household is then, not a tomb, but something worse, — a convent.

In the centre of this glacial sphere the magistrate now contemplated his wife without passion or illusion; he remarked with keen regret the narrowness of her ideas, betrayed externally by the way the hair grew on the low forehead which was hollow beneath the temples. He saw in the perfect regularity of her features something, it is hard to say what, of fixedness and rigidity which made him almost hate the

specious gentleness by which he had been won. He felt that the day might come when those thin lips would say to him in presence of some misfortune: "It is sent for your good, my friend."

Madame de Granville's face was gradually assuming a wan complexion and a stern expression which killed all joy in those who came in contact with her. Was this change brought about by the ascetic habits of a piety which is no more true piety than avarice is economy; or was it produced by the dryness natural to a bigoted soul? It would be difficult to say; beauty without passion is perhaps an imposture. The imperturbable smile which this young woman trained upon her face as she looked at her husband, seemed to be a sort of jesuitized formula of happiness by which she believed she satisfied the demands of marriage. Her charity wounded, her passionless beauty seemed a monstrosity to those who observed her; the softest of her speeches made them impatient, for she was not obeying a feeling, but a sense of duty.

There are certain defects which, in a woman, will often yield to lessons of experience or to the influence of a husband, but nothing can ever overcome the tyranny of false religious ideas. An eternity of happiness to win, put into the scales against earthly pleasure, will always triumph, and make all things bearable. May not this be called deified egotism, the *I* beyond the grave? Even the pope was condemned before the judgment-seat of the canon and the young *dévote.* The impossibility of being wrong is a feeling that ends by superseding all others in these despotic souls.

Thus, for some time past, an underground struggle had been going on between the opposing ideas of husband and wife, but Granville was now weary of a battle which he saw would never cease. What husband could bear incessantly before him the sight of a face hypocritically affectionate, and the annoyance of categorical remonstrances opposed to his slightest will? How treat a woman who uses your passion to protect her own want of feeling, who seems resolved to remain inexorably gentle, and prepares with delight to play the part of victim, regarding her husband as an instrument of God, — a scourge, whose flagellations are to spare her those of purgatory? But what description can give an idea of these women who make virtue odious by distorting the precepts of a religion which Saint John summed up in one, namely: "Love one another?"

Thus, in that domestic existence which needs so much expansion, Granville's life was now companionless. Nothing in his home was sympathetic to him. The large crucifix placed between his wife's bed and his own was like a symbol of his destiny. Did it not represent the killing of a divine thing, — the death of a God-man in all the beauty of life and youth? The ivory of that cross was less cold than Angélique as she sacrificed her husband in the name of virtue. The misery of the young magistrate became intense; he went alone into the world, and to theatres; his wife saw only duties, and pleasures to be shunned in marriage, but what could he say? he could not even complain. He possessed a young and pretty wife, attached to her duties, virtuous, — the model, in fact, of all the

virtues. She brought him a child every year; nursed her children, and trained them up to the highest principles. Her charitable soul was thought angelic. The elderly women who composed the society in which she lived (for in those days young women had not as yet taken it into their heads to make a fashion of devotion) admired Madame de Granville's zealous piety, and regarded her, if not as a virgin, at least as a martyr.

Insensibly, Granville, overwhelmed with toil, deprived of pleasures, weary of society where he wandered alone, fell, by the time he was thirty-two, into a condition of painful apathy. Life became odious to him. Having too high a sense of his obligations to allow himself to fall into irregular ways, he endeavored to stupefy himself by toil, and began a great work on a legal subject. But he did not long enjoy that form of monastic peace on which he had counted.

When the pious Angélique saw that he deserted society and worked at home with a sort of regularity, she thought the time had come to convert him. To feel that her husband's views were not Christian was a genuine grief to her; she often wept at the thought that if he died suddenly he would perish in his sin, and she could then have no hope of saving him from the flames of eternal punishment. Henceforth Granville became a target for the petty thrusts, the paltry arguments, the narrow views by which his wife, who thought she had won a first victory by withdrawing him from the world, endeavored to obtain a second by bringing him into the pale of the Church.

This was the last drop to his cup of misery. What

could be more intolerable than a dumb struggle in which the obstinacy of a narrow mind endeavored to subdue the intelligence of the lawyer; what more horrible to bear than this acrid nagging to which a generous nature would far prefer an open stab? Granville deserted his house, where all was now unbearable to him. His children, subjected to the cold despotism of their mother, were not allowed to accompany him to the theatre; he was literally unable to give them a single pleasure without drawing down upon them a rebuke from his wife. This man, naturally loving, was driven into a condition of indifference, of selfish egotism, which to him was worse than death.

He saved his sons as soon as possible from the hell of this life by sending them to school at an early age, and by maintaining firmly his right to manage them. He did not interfere, or interfered very rarely, between the mother and her daughters, though he resolved to marry the latter as soon as they attained to a marriageable age. If he had taken a more decided and violent course nothing would have justified it. His wife, supported by the formidable circle of pious dowagers among whom she lived, could have shown his injustice to all the world. Granville had literally no other resource than a life of isolation. Crushed under the tyranny of these misfortunes, his very features, withered and hardened by grief and toil, became displeasing to himself; he shrank from all intercourse with others, especially with women of society, from whom he despaired of gaining any comfort.

The didactic history of this sad household during the fifteen years between 1806 and 1821 offers no

scene that is worthy of being related. Madame de Granville remained precisely the same woman after she had lost her husband's heart as she was in the days when she called herself happy. She made novenas, praying God and the saints to enlighten her mind as to the faults by which she displeased her husband, and to show her the means of bringing back that erring sheep into the fold. But the more fervent her prayers, the less her husband appeared in his home. For five years past Granville, now attorney-general under the Restoration, had taken up his abode on the ground-floor of his house to avoid the necessity of living with his wife. Every morning a scene took place which (if we may believe the gossip of society) occurs in the bosom of many a family, — produced by incompatibility of temper, or by mental and physical diseases, or by antagonisms which bring the results related in this history to many a marriage. Every morning at eight o'clock the countess's waiting-woman, looking much like a nun, rang at the door of the count's apartment. Shown into the salon adjoining the magistrate's study, she gave to the valet, and always in the same tone, this stereotyped message: —

"Madame begs to know if Monsieur le comte has passed a good night, and whether she shall have the pleasure of breakfasting with him."

"Monsieur," the valet would reply, after conveying the message to his master, "presents his regards to Madame la comtesse and begs her to excuse him; an important affair obliges him to go to the Palais at once."

A few moments later the maid would reappear to

ask in Madame's name if she should have the pleasure of seeing Monsieur le comte before he went out.

"He has gone already," the valet would reply, though the count's carriage might be still in the court-yard.

This ambassadorial dialogue was a daily ceremony. Granville's valet, who, being a favorite with his master, was the cause of more than one quarrel in the household on account of his irreligion and moral laxity, would sometimes take the message as a matter of form into the study when the count was not there, bringing back the accustomed answer. The afflicted wife would often watch for her husband's return and go down to the vestibule and place herself in his way to awaken his remorse. This petty teasing, characteristic of monastic life, was a strong feature in the nature of this woman, who, though she was only thirty-five, now looked to be over forty.

The presidency of a royal court in the provinces was offered to the Comte de Granville, who stood well in favor with the King, but he begged the ministry to allow him to remain in Paris. This refusal, the reasons for which were known only to the Keeper of the Seals, suggested various strange conjectures among the intimates of the countess, and more especially to her confessor. Granville, the possessor of a hundred thousand francs a year, belonged to one of the highest families in Normandy; his appointment to a royal court was a first step to the peerage. Why, then, such a lack of ambition? Why had he given up his great work on Law? Whence this unnatural life which had made him for the last five years almost a

stranger to his home, his duties, and to all that ought to be dear to him? The countess's confessor, who relied on the support of the families where he ruled to advance him to a bishopric, had met with disappointment from Granville, who refused him his influence; and he now aspersed him with suppositions.

"If Monsieur le comte," he said, "was reluctant to live in the provinces, it was probably because he feared the necessity of having to lead a moral life. The position of a chief-justice would force him to live with his wife and abandon all illicit connections. A woman as pure as the Comtesse de Granville could never overlook the fact, if it came to her knowledge, of her husband's irregularities.

Angélique's dowager friends did not leave her in ignorance of these remarks, which, alas! were not groundless; the effect upon her was that of a thunderbolt.

Without any just ideas of life or of society, ignorant of love and its madness, Madame de Granville was so far from supposing that marriage could bring other troubles than those which alienated her from her husband, that she thought him incapable of the faults which are the crimes of married life. When the count no longer sought her society and lived apart, she imagined that the calmness of such a life was that of nature. She had given him all the affection her heart was capable of giving to a man, and these conjectures of her confessor completely destroyed all the illusions in which she had lived up to that moment. At first, therefore, she defended her husband; although, at the same time, she was unable to put away the suspicions

so cleverly introduced into her mind. This struggle caused such ravages in her feeble brain that before long her health gave way and she fell a victim to slow fever.

These events took place during the Lent of 1822, but her piety would not relax its austerities, and she finally reached a state of exhaustion in which her very life seemed threatened. Granville's indifference to her condition wounded her deeply. His attentions were more like those that a nephew compels himself to pay to an uncle. Though the countess tried to greet her husband with pleasant words, and renounced for the time being her system of nagging remonstrance, the sourness of the *dévote* was still perceptible, and often destroyed by a few words the work of days.

Toward the end of May, the balmy breath of spring and a more nourishing diet than Lent allowed brought back some strength to Madame de Granville. One morning, on her return from mass, she seated herself on a stone bench in her little garden, where the warm caresses of the sunshine recalled to her the pleasant early days of her marriage. Her mind took in at a glance the whole of her married life, striving to see in what possible way she could have failed in her duty as wife and mother. While she sat there the Abbé Fontanon appeared, in a state of very evident agitation.

"Has anything happened to distress you, father?" she asked, with filial solicitude.

"Ah! I would that all the misfortunes which the hand of God is laying heavily upon you, were laid on me," said the Norman priest. "But, my worthy friend, these are trials to which you must submit."

"Can any chastisement be greater than that to which the Divine Providence has already subjected me, using my husband as the instrument of its wrath?"

"Prepare yourself, my daughter, for greater sorrow than any you have hitherto undergone."

"Then I thank God that he deigns to make use of you to lay his will upon me," said the countess, "following the vials of his wrath with the treasures of his mercy, even as he showed to Hagar in the desert a living spring."

"He allots your penalties to the weight of your sins and the measure of your resignation," said the priest.

"Speak, father; I am ready to hear all;" so saying, the countess raised her eyes to heaven; then she said again, "Speak, Monsieur Fontanon."

"For the last seven years Monsieur de Granville has committed the crime of adultery with a concubine by whom he has two children. He has spent upon this illicit household more than five hundred thousand francs, which ought to have belonged to his legitimate family."

"I must see that with my own eyes before I believe it," said the countess.

"No, be very careful to avoid that," said the priest. "My daughter, it is your duty to forgive, and to wait, in prayer, till God sees fit to change your husband's heart. You must not employ such human means against him."

The long conversation which followed produced a violent change in the whole manner and appearance of the countess. She dismissed the confessor at last, and appeared with a flushed face before her servants,

who were frightened by an activity which seemed almost insane. She ordered her carriage, then she countermanded it, ordered it again, and changed her mind a score of times within an hour. Finally, however, she appeared to come to a decisive resolution, and started from home at three o'clock, leaving her household amazed at her sudden action.

"Will your master be home to dinner?" she asked the valet (to whom she usually never spoke) as she left the house.

"No, madame."

"Did he go to the Palais this morning?"

"Yes, madame."

"To-day is Monday?"

"Yes, madame."

"Is the Palais open on Mondays now?"

"The devil take her!" thought the valet as the countess got into her carriage and gave the order: "Rue Taitbout."

Caroline de Bellefeuille was weeping; beside her was Roger, holding one of her hands in both of his. He was silent, looking alternately at little Charles, who could not understand his mother's grief, at the cradle where the baby Eugénie was sleeping, and then at the face of his friend, where the tears were falling like rain on a sunshiny day.

'Yes, my angel," said Roger, after a long silence, "that is the truth; I am married. But some day, I hope, I may have but one life, one home. My wife is in wretched health; I do not wish her death; but if it pleases God to take her, I think she will be happier

in paradise than she has been in a world the pains and pleasures of which have never touched her."

"I hate that woman! How could she make you so unhappy? And yet it is to that misfortune that I owe my happiness."

Her tears ceased suddenly.

"Caroline, let us hope on," cried Roger, with a kiss. "Never mind what the abbé said to you. Though that confessor is a dangerous man on account of his influence in the Church, if he attempts to disturb our relation I shall —"

"What?"

"Take you to Italy; I will flee —"

A cry coming from the next room made them start; they both rushed there, and found Madame de Granville fainting on the floor. When she recovered her senses she gave a deep sigh on seeing herself between her husband and her rival, whom she pushed aside with an involuntary gesture of contempt.

Caroline rose to go.

"Stay where you are," said the count. "This is your house."

Then he took his fainting wife in his arms and carried her to her carriage, into which he followed her.

"What has made you desire my death? Why should you wish to flee me?" she asked, in a weak voice, looking at her husband with as much indignation as grief. "Was I not young? Did you not think me beautiful? What blame can you lay at my door? Did I ever deceive you? Have I not been a good and virtuous wife to you? My heart has held no image but yours; my ears have listened to no voice but

yours. What duty did I fail to perform? Have I ever refused you anything?"

"Yes; happiness," replied the count, in a firm voice. "There are two ways of serving God. Some Christians imagine that by entering a church and saying a Pater Noster, by hearing mass at stated times and abstaining from sinful acts they must win heaven; such persons go to hell; they have never loved God for God's sake; they do not worship him as he seeks to be worshipped; they have made him no sacrifice. Though gentle apparently, they are harsh to their neighbor; they see the law, the letter, but not the spirit. That is how you have acted with your earthly husband. You have sacrificed my happiness to your salvation. You were absorbed in the contemplation of that when I came to you with eager heart; you wept and fasted when you might have eased and brightened my toil; you have never satisfied one pleasurable desire of my life."

"But if those desires were criminal," cried the countess, hotly, "was I to lose my soul to please you?"

"That sacrifice a more loving woman has had the courage to make," replied the count, coldly.

"Oh, God!" she said, weeping. "Thou hearest him! Was he worthy of the prayers and penances in which I have spent my life to redeem his sins and my own? Of what good is virtue?"

"To win heaven, my dear; you could not be the bride of heaven and of man both; it was bigamy. You should have chosen between a husband and a convent. Instead of that, for the sake of your future salvation, you have robbed your soul and mine of

love, of all the devotion God bestows upon a woman; of the earthly emotions you have kept but one — and that is hatred."

"Have I not loved you?"

"No."

"What, then, is love?" she said, involuntarily.

"Love, my dear?" said Granville, with a sort of ironical surprise. "You are not in a condition to understand it. The sky of Normandy is never that of Spain. Perhaps the question of climate is really one of the secrets of unhappiness. Love is a mutual yielding to each other's likes and dislikes and dividing them. Love finds pleasure in pain, in sacrificing to another the opinion of the world, self-love, self-interest, religion even, — regarding all such offerings as grains of incense burned on the altar of an idol; that is love."

"The love of a ballet-girl," said the countess, horrified; "such passions cannot last; they leave nothing behind them but cinders and ashes, remorse and despair. A wife should give her husband, as I think, true friendship, an equable warmth, an — "

"You talk of warmth as negroes talk of ice," interrupted the count, with a sardonic smile. "Remember that the humblest wild-flower is more to us than a rose with thorns. But," he added, "I will do you justice. You have so firmly maintained the line of conduct prescribed by law that, in order to show you where you have failed toward me, I should have to enter upon certain details which your dignity would not permit, and say certain things which would seem to you the reverse of moral."

"Do you dare to speak of morality, — you who are leaving the house of a mistress where you have squandered the property of your children in debauchery?" cried the countess.

"Madame, I stop you there," said the count, coolly, interrupting his wife. "If Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille is rich it is not at my expense. My uncle was master of his fortune; he had many heirs. During his lifetime, and solely out of regard for a young woman whom he considered in the light of a niece, he gave her the estate of Bellefeuille."

"Such conduct is worthy of a Jacobin!" cried the pious Angélique.

"You forget that your father was one of those Jacobins whom you, a woman, condemn with so little charity," said the count, sternly. "The citizen Bontems was signing death-warrants at the time when my uncle was rendering great services to France."

Madame de Granville made no reply. But, after a moment's silence, the recollection of what she had just seen awoke the jealousy which nothing can quench in a woman's soul, and she said, in a low voice, as if speaking to herself: —

"How can a man lose his soul and that of others in this way?"

"Ah! madame," said the count, weary of the fruitless conversation, "perhaps it is you who will have to answer for all this."

These words made the countess tremble.

"But you will no doubt be excused in the eyes of that indulgent Judge who understands our faults," he added, "in virtue of the sincerity with which you have

wrought the ruin of my life. I do not hate you; I hate those who have distorted your heart and mind. You have prayed for me doubtless as sincerely as Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille has given me her heart and crowned me with love. You should have been both mistress and saint. Do me the justice to acknowledge that I have not been either wicked or debauched. My morals are pure. But alas! at the end of seven years' wretchedness, the need of being happy led me, almost insensibly, to love another woman, and to create for myself another home than mine. Do not think I am the only man in Paris who has done this. Thousands of other husbands are driven, by one cause or another, to lead this double life."

"O God!" cried the countess, "how heavy is the cross I have to bear! If the husband whom thou gavest me in thy wrath can be happy only through my death, recall me to thy bosom!"

"Had you shown those admirable feelings of self-sacrifice earlier," said the count, coldly, "we should still be happy."

"Well, then," said Angélique, bursting into tears, "forgive me if I have really done wrong. Yes, I am ready to obey you in all things, certain that you will only ask that which is natural and right. Henceforth I will be to you whatever you desire."

"If it is your intention to force me to say that I no longer love you, I must have the dreadful courage to say it. Can I control my heart? Can I efface in one moment the memories of fifteen years of misery? I love no more. Those words enfold a mystery as deep

as that contained in those other words, 'I love.' Esteem, respect, regard may be obtained, and lost, and won again, but love, ah, never! I might goad myself a thousand years and it could not live again, especially for one who has wilfully destroyed her charm."

"Ah! Monsieur le comte, I sincerely hope the day may never come when those words shall be said to you by her you love, in the tone and manner with which you say them now."

"Will you come with me to-night to the Opera and wear a ball dress?"

The shudder of repugnance which that sudden demand produced was her answer to the question.

III.

RESULT.

On one of the first days of December, 1833, a man whose snow-white hair and countenance appeared to show that grief had aged him more than years (for he seemed about sixty) was passing through the rue Gaillon after midnight. He paused before a poor-looking house of three stories to examine one of the windows which were placed at equal distances in the mansarde roof. A faint gleam came from its humble sash, in which some panes were replaced by paper. The passer was looking at that flickering light with the idle curiosity of a Parisian lounger, when a young man came suddenly and rapidly from the house. As the pale rays of the street lamp fell upon the face of the older man, he seemed not wholly surprised when, in spite of the darkness, the young man came to him, with the precautions used in Paris when one fears to be mistaken in a recognition.

"What!" exclaimed the latter, "is it really you, Monsieur le comte, alone, on foot, at this hour, and so far from the rue Saint-Lazare? Allow me the honor of offering you my arm. The pavement to-night is so slippery that unless we support each other," he added, to spare the pride of the old man, "we shall find it difficult to escape a fall."

"But, my dear friend, I am only fifty-nine years of age — unhappily for me," said the Comte de Granville. "So celebrated a physician as yourself ought to know that a man is in his full vigor at that time of life."

"Then you must be engaged in some love affair," replied Horace Bianchon, laughing. "You are not, I am sure, accustomed to go on foot. When a man has such horses as yours — "

"But the greater part of the time," said the Comte de Granville, "I do return from the Palais, or the Cercle des Étrangers, on foot "

"And carrying, no doubt, on your person large sums of money. Is n't that inviting a dagger, Monsieur le comte? "

"I am not afraid of such daggers," replied the count with a careless though melancholy air.

"But at any rate you ought not to stand still," said the physician, drawing the magistrate on toward the boulevard. "A little more, and I shall think you want to rob me of your last illness, and to die by another hand than mine."

"Well, you surprised me engaged in a bit of spying," said the count, smiling. "Whether I pass through this street on foot or in a carriage, at any hour of the night I am certain to see at a third story window of the house you have just left the shadow of a person who appears to be working with heroic courage."

So saying, the count stopped short, as if some sudden pang had seized him.

"I take as much interest in that attic," he continued, "as a Parisian bourgeois feels in the completion of the Palais-Royal — "

"Well," cried Horace, eagerly, interrupting the count, "I can tell you — "

"Tell me nothing," said Granville, cutting short the doctor's words. "I would n't give a penny to know if the shadow that flickers on that ragged curtain is that of a man or woman, or if the occupant of that garret is happy or unhappy. If I was surprised to-night not to see that person working, and if I stopped for a moment to gaze at the window, it was solely for the amusement of making conjectures as numerous and as silly as those the street idlers make about buildings in course of erection. For the last nine years, my young — "

He stopped, seemed to hesitate to use some expression, and then, with a hasty gesture, added: —

"No, I will not call you friend; I detest every semblance of sentiment. For the last nine years, as I was saying, I am no longer surprised that old people take pleasure in cultivating flowers and planting trees. The events of life have taught them not to trust in human affections. I grew an old man suddenly; I attach myself now to none but animals; I will call no man friend. I abhor the life of the world, in which I am alone. Nothing, nothing," added the count, with an expression which made the young man shudder,—"nothing can move me now, and nothing can interest me."

"But you have children?"

"My children!" he replied, in a tone of strange bitterness. "Yes, my eldest daughter is the Comtesse de Vandenesse. As for the other, her sister's marriage has opened the way to hers. My two sons have met with great success; the vicomte is attorney-gen-

eral at Limoges, and the younger is king's attorney. My children have their own interests, cares, and solicitudes. If a single one among them had tried to fill the void that is *here*," he said, striking his breast, "well, that one would have ruined his or her life by sacrificing it to me! And why have done so, after all, merely to brighten my few remaining years? Besides, could it have been done? Should I not have looked upon such generous care as the payment of a debt? But — "

Here the old man smiled with deepest irony.

"But, doctor, the lessons we teach our children in arithmetic are never lost; they learn how to calculate — their inheritance. At this moment mine are reckoning on that."

"Oh! Monsieur le comte, how can such thoughts have come into your mind?— you, so kind, so obliging, so humane? Am I not myself a living proof of the beneficence of which you take so broad and grand a view? "

"For my own pleasure," said the count, hastily. "I pay for a sensation as I shall pay to-morrow in piles of gold for the paltry excitement of play, which stirs my heart for an instant. I help my fellow-mortals for the same reason that I play at cards. Therefore I look for no gratitude from any one. Ah! young man, the events of life have flowed across my soul like the lava of Vesuvius through Herculaneum; the city exists, dead."

"Those who have brought a soul so warm and living as yours to such a point of insensibility are guilty of an awful wrong."

"Not another word!" cried the count, with a look of horror.

"You have a malady upon you which you ought to let me cure," said Bianchon, in a voice of emotion.

"Do you know a cure for death?" exclaimed the count, impatiently.

"Yes, Monsieur le comte, I will engage to stir that heart you call so dead."

"Are you another Talma?"

"No; but Nature is as far superior to Talma as Talma may be to me. Hear me: that garret at which you gazed with interest is inhabited by a woman, some thirty years of age, in whom love has become fanaticism. The object of her worship is a young man of fine appearance, to whom some evil genius gave at birth all the vices of humanity. He is a gambler; whether he loves women or wine best no one could decide; he has committed, to my knowledge, crimes that should have brought him to the correctional police. Well, that unhappy woman sacrificed for him a happy life, a man who adored her, by whom she had two children — What is it, Monsieur le comte? are you ill?"

"No, nothing; go on!"

"She has let him squander her whole property; she would give him, I think, the world if she had it; night and day she works; often, without a murmur, she has seen that monster take the money she had earned to clothe her children — nay, their very food for the morrow! Three days ago she sold her hair, the finest I ever saw; that man came in before she hid the bit of gold; he claimed it; for a smile, a kiss,

she gave him the value of days of life and comfort! Is not such love both shocking and sublime? But toil and hunger have begun to waste her strength; the cries of her children torture her; she has fallen ill; to-night she is moaning on her pallet, unable, as you saw, to work. The children have had no food all day; they have ceased to cry, being too weak; they were silent when I got there."

Bianchon stopped. The Comte de Granville, as if in spite of himself, had plunged his hand into his pocket.

"I foresee, my young friend, that she will live," said the old man, "if you take care of her."

"Ah! poor creature," cried the doctor, "who would not take care of one so wretched? But I hope to do more; I hope to cure her of her love."

"But," said the count, withdrawing his hand full of bank-notes from his pocket, "why should I pity a wretchedness whose joys would seem to me worth more than all my fortune? She feels, she lives, that woman! Louis XV. would have given his whole kingdom to rise from his coffin and have three days of youth and life. Is not that the history of millions of dead men, millions of sick men, millions of old men?"

"Poor Caroline!" exclaimed the physician.

Hearing that name the Comte de Granville quivered; he seized the arm of his companion, who fancied himself gripped by iron pincers.

"Is she Caroline Crochard?" asked the old man, in a faltering voice.

"Then you know her?" replied the doctor.

"And that wretch is named Solvet— Ah! you have kept your word; you have stirred my heart by the most terrible sensation I shall know till I am dust," said the count. "Another of hell's gifts!" he cried; "but I know how to pay them back."

At that moment the count and Bianchon had reached the corner of the rue de la Chaussée-d'Antin. One of those night-birds, a scavenger, with his basket on his back and a hook in his hand, was close beside the post where the count had now stopped short. The face of the old rag-picker was worthy of those which Charlet has immortalized in his sketches of the school of sweepers.

"Do you often pick up thousand-franc notes?" the count said to him.

"Sometimes, my master."

"Do you return them?"

"That 's according to the reward offered."

"Here, my man," cried the count, giving him a note for a thousand francs. "Take that; but remember that I give it to you on condition that you spend it at a tavern, get drunk upon it, quarrel, beat your wife, stab your friends. That will set the watch, and surgeons and doctors, perhaps the gendarmes, the attorneys, the judges and the jailers all to work. Don't change that programme, or the devil will revenge it on you."

It needs an artist with the pencil of Charlet and Callot and the brushes of Teniers and Rembrandt to give a true idea of this nocturnal scene.

"There 's my account settled, for the present, with hell, and I have had some pleasure out of my money,"

said the count in a deep voice, pointing out to the stupefied physician the indescribable face of the gaping rag-picker. "As for Caroline Crochard," he continued, "she may die in the tortures of hunger and thirst, listening to the cries of her starving children, recognizing the vileness of that man she loves. I will not give one penny to keep her from suffering; and I will never speak to you again, for the sole reason that you have succored her."

The count left Bianchon standing motionless as a statue, and disappeared, moving with the rapidity of a young man in the direction of the rue Saint-Lazare. When he reached the little house which he occupied in that street, he saw, with some surprise, a carriage before the door.

"Monsieur le procureur du roi," said his valet when he entered, "has been here an hour, waiting to speak with monsieur. He is in monsieur's bedroom."

Granville made a sign to the man, who retired.

"What motive could be strong enough to make you break my express orders that none of my children should come to this house without being sent for?" he said to his son as he entered the room.

"Father," said the son, respectfully, in a voice that trembled, "I feel sure you will pardon me when you have heard my reason."

"Your answer is a proper one," said his father, pointing to a chair. "Sit down; but whether I sit or walk about, pay no attention to my movements."

"Father," said the procureur du roi, "a young lad has been arrested this evening at the house of a friend

of mine, where he committed a theft; the lad appeals to you and says he is your son."

"His name?" asked the count, trembling.

"Charles Crochard."

"Enough," said the father, with an imperative gesture.

Granville walked up and down the room in a deep silence which his son was careful not to break.

"My son," he said at last, in a tone so gentle, so paternal that the young man quivered, "Charles Crochard has told the truth. I am glad that you have come to me, my good Eugène. Here is a sum of money," he added, taking up a mass of bank-bills, "which you must use as you see fit in this affair. I trust in you, and I approve, in advance, all that you may do, whether at the present time, or in the future. Eugène, my dear son, kiss me; perhaps we now see each other for the last time. To-morrow I shall ask leave of absence of the king and start for Italy. Though a father is not bound to account to his children for his conduct, he ought to leave them as a legacy the experience which fate has allotted to him, —it is a part of their inheritance. When you marry," continued the count, with an involuntary shudder, "do not commit that act, the most important of all those imposed upon us by society, thoughtlessly. Study long the character of the woman with whom you associate yourself for life; also consult me; I should wish to judge her for myself. A want of union between husband and wife, however it may be caused, leads to frightful evils. We are, sooner or later, punished for

not obeying social laws — But as to that, I will write to you from Florence; a father, especially if he has the honor to be a judge in the highest courts of law, ought not to blush in presence of his son. Farewell."

THE PEACE OF A HOME.

THE PEACE OF A HOME.

To my dear niece, Valentine Surville.

The incident related in this Scene took place toward the end of November, in the year 1809, at the period when the fleeting empire of Napoleon was at its apogee of splendor. The trumpets of the victory of Wagram were still echoing in the heart of the Austrian monarchy. Peace was signed between France and the Coalition. Kings and princes were coming, like planets, to accomplish their evolutions round Napoleon, who gave himself the happiness of dragging all Europe in his suite, — a magnificent exercise of power, which he displayed later, and more signally, at Dresden.

Never, within the knowledge of contemporaries, did Paris witness such splendid fêtes as those which preceded and followed the marriage of the sovereign with the archduchess of Austria. Never, in the grandest days of the old monarchy, had so many crowned heads gathered on the banks of the Seine, and never was the aristocracy of France so rich and brilliant. The diamonds profusely strewn upon all toilets, the gold and silver lace of the uniforms contrasted so strongly with

republican plainness that it seemed as if the riches of the globe had suddenly been poured into the salons of Paris. A general intoxication had, as it were, seized upon that empire of a day. All the military, with the one exception of their leader, were revelling like parvenus in the treasures won by millions of men in woollen epaulets, whose own demands were satisfied with scraps of red ribbon.

At this period most women affected the ease and laxity of morals which distinguished the reign of Louis XV. Whether it was in imitation of the tone of the fallen monarchy, or because certain members of the imperial family set the example (as the cavillers of the faubourg Saint-Germain averred), it is undeniable that men and women rushed into pleasures and dissipation with a daring that seemed to foreshadow a coming cataclysm.

There was, however, another reason for the license that prevailed. The infatuation of women for the military became an actual frenzy, and it suited the views of the emperor too well to allow him to curb it. The frequent call to arms, which made the treaties concluded between Napoleon and the European powers seem little more than armistices, exposed all passions and courtships to chances and changes as rapid as the marching and countermarching of the forces. Hearts became as nomad as the regiments. Between a first and a fifth bulletin from the Grand Army a woman might have been, successively, mistress and wife, mother and widow. Was it the perspective of probable widowhood, or the hope of bearing a name inscribed on the pages of history, that made these

imperial soldiers so seductive? Were women drawn to these heroes by the thought that the secret of their loves might soon be buried on a battle-field? Or may we seek the cause of their tender fanaticism in the noble attraction which courage has for women? Perhaps all these motives, which the future historians of the Empire may amuse themselves by weighing, counted for something in the facile promptitude with which they gave themselves to love. However that may be, we must admit that laurels in those days covered many a lapse from virtue; women sought those bold adventurers, who to their eyes were sources of honor, wealth, and pleasure; while to unmarried girls an epaulet, that talisman of the future, signified joy and freedom.

A trait of this epoch, unique in our annals, which may be said to characterize it, was a frantic passion for all that glittered. Never were seen such fireworks; never were diamonds so valued. Men, as eager as women for the precious white pebbles, decked themselves with them profusely. Possibly the army need of carrying booty in small compass brought jewels into this extreme prominence in France. A man was not thought ridiculous, as he would be to-day, if he appeared with the frill of his shirt and all his fingers adorned with enormous diamonds. Murat, a man by nature oriental, set the example of this absurd luxury to modern soldiers.

The Comte de Gondreville, formerly called citizen Malin, whose abduction had made him celebrated [see "An Historical Mystery"], was one of the Luculluses of that conservative Senate that conserved nothing.

He had postponed the giving of a fête in honor of the Peace in order to pay special court to Napoleon on his return to Paris by eclipsing the other flatterers who then surrounded him.

The ambassadors of all the powers friendly to France, the most important personages of the Empire, certain princes, and all the women distinguished in this society, were, on the evening of which we write, assembled in the salons of the opulent senator. Dancing languished, for the company awaited the Emperor, whose presence had been promised to the count. Napoleon would have kept this appointment had it not been for a scene that occurred between himself and Joséphine, — the scene in which the divorce was first discussed between them. The fact of that incident, then kept secret but revealed by history, did not reach the ears of the courtiers, and had no adverse influence on the gayety of Gondreville's fête, except by keeping the Emperor away from it. The prettiest women in Paris were present, rivalling each other in luxury, coquetry, beauty, and jewels. The Bank, the moneyed circle, proud of its wealth, seemed anxious to defy those gorgeous generals and grand-officers of the Empire, who were literally gorged with crosses and titles and decorations.

These great balls were occasions eagerly seized by the rich families to produce their young heiresses before the eyes of Napoleon's heroes, with the rash design of exchanging their solid *dot* for a very uncertain constancy. Women who thought the power of their beauty sufficient went to prove it. There, as elsewhere, pleasure was only a mask. Serene and

smiling faces, calm and undisturbed foreheads hid odious calculations; friendly assurances were hollow; and many men and women distrusted their friends even more than they did their enemies.

These observations were necessary to explain the events of the little imbroglio which makes the subject of this Scene, and the painting, slightly softened, of the tone and manners which reigned at that period in the salons of Paris.

"Turn your eyes toward that truncated column on which is a candelabrum; don't you see that young woman with her hair *à la chinoise*, — there, in the corner, to the left? She wears blue harebells in her chestnut hair, which is coiled in a mass at the back of her head. Surely you see her now? She is so pale she must be ill; what a dainty little thing it is! now she is looking towards us; her eyes are blue, almond-shaped, enchantingly soft, made for tenderness! But look, look there! she is stooping to watch Madame de Vaudremont through this labyrinth of moving heads with their lofty *coiffures* which intercept her sight."

"Yes, I see her, my dear fellow. You need only have said she was the fairest woman here. I've noticed her before; she has the most perfect complexion I have ever seen. I defy you to distinguish at this distance the pearls on her neck from the skin of it. But she is either prudish or coquettish, for the ruches on her gown will scarcely allow one to guess at her figure. But what shoulders! the dewy whiteness of a lily itself!"

"Who is she?" said the man who had spoken first.

"Ah! that I don't know."

"Aristocrat! Do you mean, Montcornet, to keep all the pretty women to yourself?"

"It is highly becoming in you to gird at me!" replied Montcornet, laughing. "Do you think you have the right to insult a poor general because, being the successful rival of de Soulanges, you can't cut a caper without alarming Madame de Vaudremont? How insolent you are, you government officials, who sit supreme in your chairs, while we, poor devils! have the shells whizzing round us. Come, master of petitions, let others glean in the field whose precarious possession shall not be yours till we soldiers leave it. Hey! the deuce! you should live and let live! My friend, if you did but know German women you 'd be willing to serve me, I think, with this Parisian you admire."

"General, since you have already honored with your notice this woman, whom I have just seen for the first time, have the charity to tell me whether you have seen her dancing."

"My dear Martial, where do you come from? If you are sent on an embassy I augur ill of your success. Don't you see three ranks of the most finished coquettes in Paris between that lady and the swarm of dancers who are buzzing under the chandelier? Did n't you yourself need an eyeglass to discover her in the angle of that column where she seems to be buried in obscurity, in spite of the candles which blaze above her head? My dear fellow, she is probably the wife of a sub-prefect in Lippe or Dyle, who has come here to try to make a prefect of her husband."

"Then she will do it," said the master of petitions, hastily.

"I doubt it," said the colonel of cuirassiers, laughing. "She seems as new to intrigue as you are to diplomacy. I'll bet, Martial, that you can't find out how she came here."

The master of petitions looked at the colonel of cuirassiers with an air of mingled disdain and curiosity.

"Well," said Montcornet, "she arrived, no doubt, at nine o'clock, punctually, — the first guest, probably, and very annoying to Madame de Gondreville, who can't keep two ideas in her head at the same time. Snubbed by the mistress of the house, and retreating from chair to chair as each new guest arrived, till she was squeezed into that dark corner, she has n't dared to escape, shut in as she is by the jealousy of the women about her, who would like nothing better than to bury that dangerous face. Those gentle creatures, so innocent apparently, have formed a coalition against her; and that without a word to each other beyond, 'Do you know who that little woman in a blue dress can be?' Look here, Martial, if you want to be overwhelmed with flattering looks and more enticing speeches than you'll ever get again in the whole course of your life, try to break through the triple rampart that surrounds your white lady. You'll see if the stupidest of those women has n't something piquant to say, some clever trick to play to stop you before you can reach the plaintive stranger. Don't you think, by the bye, that her air is somewhat elegiac?"

"Do you think so, Montcornet? Of course she 's a married woman?"

"Why not a widow?"

"She would be more lively," said the master of petitions, laughing.

"Perhaps she is a widow whose husband plays *bouillotte*," said the general.

"Since the peace there have been plenty of such widows," replied Martial. "But, my dear Montcornet, we are two idiots. That head expresses innocence; there is too much youth and candor on that forehead and about those temples; no, she cannot be a married woman. What vigorous tints in the pure skin; nothing shrunken about the texture of the nose! The lips, the chin, all is fresh on that face like the bud of a white rose. — And yet its expression is veiled by a cloud; what should make such a beautiful young creature weep?"

"Women weep for so little," said the colonel.

"Do they?" said Martial. "But she is not sad because she does not dance; her grief is not of the moment. She has made herself beautiful to-night for some purpose, one can see that. She loves already — I 'll wager that she does."

"Bah! very likely she is the daughter of some penniless princelet of Germany: no one has spoken to her," said Montcornet.

"Ah! how unfortunate a penniless girl is," replied Martial. "Look at her! what grace, what delicacy! And yet not one of those shrews around her, who think themselves so sensible, has said a word to her. I wish she would smile; we could see if her teeth are beautiful."

"*Ah ça!* why, you boil up like milk!" cried the colonel, rather piqued to find a rival in his friend.

"How strange!" continued the master of petitions, paying no heed to the colonel's remark, and turning his eyeglass on the company who surrounded them, — "how strange that no one seems to know that sweet exotic flower!"

"She 's a companion, or governess, probably," said Montcornet.

"Nonsense! — a governess with sapphires that are worthy of a queen, and wearing a Mechlin dress! Tell that to an ignoramus, general! You will never be strong in diplomacy if you mistake a German princess for a lady's companion."

General Montcornet here caught by the arm a stout little man, whose grizzled hair and lively eyes might be seen in all the doorways, mingling unceremoniously in the various groups, who greeted him respectfully.

"Gondreville, my dear friend," said Montcornet, "who is that charming little woman sitting over there under the great chandelier?"

"The chandelier? made by Ravrio, my dear fellow; Isabey gave the design."

"Oh, I have already recognized your taste there," said the general, "but who is the lady?"

"I don't know. Some friend of my wife, I suppose."

"Perhaps your mistress, old slyboots."

"No, no, word of honor! Madame de Gondreville is the one woman in Paris capable of inviting people whom nobody knows to her house."

In spite of this rather sour remark, the stout little

man continued to smile with inward satisfaction at the colonel's supposition. The latter now rejoined Martial among a group of other men from whom he was vainly endeavoring to find out the name of the unknown lady. The colonel caught him by the arm, and whispered: —

"My dear fellow, take care what you are doing! Madame de Vaudremont has been watching you for the last few minutes with alarming attention. She is a woman to guess from the very motion of your lips what you are saying to me. Our eyes have been too significant; she has followed their direction, and she is now more interested than we are in the little blue lady."

"That 's an old bit of strategy, my dear Montcornet! Besides, what do I care? I am like the Emperor; when I make conquests I keep them."

"Martial, your conceit deserves a lesson. What, *pékin!* you who have the happiness of being the probable husband of Madame de Vaudremont, a charming widow, twenty-two years old, afflicted with four thousand napoleons a year, a woman who puts a diamond on your finger as beautiful as this," and he took the hand of the young man, who complacently allowed him to look at the ring it bore, "do *you* pretend to play Lovelace as if you were a colonel of cuirassiers and forced to sustain a military reputation in love? Reflect, my dear fellow, on what you may lose."

"It won't be my liberty, at any rate," replied Martial, with a laugh that was somewhat forced.

He cast a passionate glance at Madame de Vaudremont, who replied by a smile that was somewhat

anxious, for she had seen the general examine the ring on the young man's hand.

"Listen, Martial," said the colonel; "if you persist in hovering round my unknown lady, I will turn round and undertake the conquest of Madame de Vaudremont."

"So you may, dear cuirassier, but you won't obtain *that!*" and he put the polished nail of his thumb under his upper teeth and gave a click.

"Remember that I am a bachelor, and my sword is my fortune," said the colonel; "to dare me thus is to seat Tantalus before a feast — which he will devour."

"Br-r-r!"

This mocking accumulation of consonants served as an answer to the general's challenge. Martial looked him over gayly as he nodded his head and prepared to leave him.

The fashion of the day obliged men to wear white cassimere breeches and white silk stockings at a ball. This becoming costume brought out the perfections of Montcornet's figure. He was then about thirty-five years of age, and attracted all eyes by his height, which was that required for the cuirassiers of the Imperial Guard, the handsome uniform of which corps enhanced the dignity of his figure in spite of a certain embonpoint caused by being constantly in the saddle.

His black moustache gave a frank expression to a martial face, the forehead of which was broad and open; the nose was aquiline and the lips red. Montcornet's manners, which bore the imprint of a certain nobility, caused by the habit of command, might please a woman who would have the good sense not

to wish to make a slave of her husband. The colonel smiled as he nodded in return to the master of petitions, one of his earliest and best school friends, whose little slim figure obliged him, in order to reply to his sarcasm, to drop his satirically amical glance rather low.

The Baron Martial de la Roche-Hugon was a young Provençal whom Napoleon protected, and whose chances for some nice berth in diplomacy were therefore great. He had charmed the Emperor by an Italian pliancy, by his genius for intrigue, by that eloquence of the salon and science of manners which so often and so easily stand in place of more solid and manly qualities. Though young and vivacious, his face already had the unreflecting gleam of tin, a quality indispensable to diplomatists, allowing them to hide their emotions and disguise their sentiments, if, indeed, that impassibility does not argue in them the absence of all emotion and the death of sentiments. The heart of a diplomatist may be regarded as an insoluble problem, for the three most illustrious ambassadors of the present epoch have distinguished themselves by the persistency of their hatreds and the romantic devotion of their love.

Martial belonged to the class of men who are able to calculate their future in the midst of their most eager enjoyments. He had already judged the world with the fatuity of a man *à bonnes fortunes*, disguising his real talents under the livery of mediocrity, having shrewdly remarked the rapidity with which those persons who gave little umbrage to the master made their way.

The two friends now parted with a cordial shake of the hand. The music of the ritornello, which warned the ladies it was time to form the quadrilles of a new country-dance, drove the men from the centre of the room where they were talking in groups. The rapid conversation we have just quoted, occurring in the interval between the dances, took place before the fireplace of the great salon of the hôtel Gondreville. The questions and answers had been scarcely more than whispered in each other's ear; but the chandeliers and the candles on the chimney-piece threw such a strong light on the two friends that, in spite of their diplomatic caution, their faces were unable to disguise the expression of their feelings from either the clever countess or the innocent young stranger. This detection of thought is to idlers one of the pleasures that they find in society, where so many stupid fools are bored to death — without, however, daring to acknowledge it.

To understand the interest of the conversation it is necessary to relate an event which, by invisible links, was about to unite the personages of our little drama, who were at this moment scattered about the salons.

At eleven o'clock, just as the dancers had taken their places, the most beautiful woman in Paris and the queen of fashion had entered the room. She made it a rule never to arrive at a ball until the moment when the salons had reached that condition of animated excitement which soon takes from the women present the freshness of their faces and that of their gowns. This fleeting moment may be called the spring-time of a ball. An hour later, when the pleasure is

past, fatigue appears, and the scene fades. Madame de Vaudremont never committed the mistake of staying in a ballroom till her flowers drooped, her curls uncurled, her dress was crushed, and sleep had wooed her eyelids. She was careful not to be seen, like her rivals, in drowsy beauty; she maintained her reputation for coquettish charm by retreating from a festal scene as fresh as when she entered it.

On this occasion, however, Madame de Vaudremont was destined not to be free to leave whenever she chose the salon she now entered in triumph. Pausing a moment on the threshold of the door, she cast an observing though rapid glance on the women present, studying their gowns in that instant to convince herself that hers outdid them all. The celebrated coquette then advanced into the room, on the arm of one of the bravest colonels of the artillery of the Guard, a favorite of the Emperor, the Comte de Soulanges. The momentary union of these two persons seemed to have something interesting about it, for on hearing the names announced of Monsieur de Soulanges and the Comtesse de Vaudremont several women seated like wall-flowers rose, and some men hurried from the other salons to observe this entrance. One of the jesters who are never absent from such assemblies remarked that "the ladies had as much curiosity to see a man faithful to his passion as the men had to watch the behavior of a pretty woman whom it was difficult to fix."

Though the Comte de Soulanges, a young man of twenty-six, was gifted with that high-strung temperament which gives birth to the noblest qualities of men,

his puny figure and his pallid skin did not prepossess in his favor. His black eyes showed vivacity, but he was taciturn in society, and nothing revealed in him one of those great oratorical talents which were destined to shine on the Right in the legislative assemblies of the Restoration. The Comtesse de Vaudremont, a tall, rather plump woman, with a skin that was dazzlingly white, carrying her little head marvellously well, and, possessing the immense advantage of inspiring love by the charm of her manners, was one of those beings who fulfil the promises held out by their beauty.

This couple, now the object of general attention, did not allow the general curiosity to meddle with them long. The colonel and the countess seemed perfectly to understand that chance had placed them in an awkward position. As Martial de la Roche-Hugon saw them advance, he darted behind the group of men around the fireplace, who formed a rampart behind which he could observe Madame de Vaudremont with the jealous attention of the first heat of a passion. A secret voice seemed to warn him that a success on which he prided himself might be, after all, precarious. But the coldly polite smile with which the countess thanked Monsieur de Soulanges, and the gesture with which she dismissed him as she took a seat beside the Comtesse de Gondreville, relaxed the muscles which jealousy had gathered into a knot upon Martial's face. Perceiving, however, that de Soulanges was still standing within two feet of the sofa on which she was sitting, apparently not comprehending the glance by which the young coquette had

told him that they were making themselves ridiculous, Martial, whose Provençal head was volcanic, frowned the black brows that overshadowed his blue eyes, arranged the curls of his brown hair to keep himself quiet, and, without betraying the emotion that made his heart beat, he watched the countenance of Madame de Vaudremont and that of Monsieur de Soulanges, while chattering with his neighbors.

Soulanges cast tranquil glances on the quadruple line of women who surrounded the vast salon of the senator, apparently admiring that border of diamonds, rubies, and golden wheat-ears flashing on plumed heads whose glitter paled the light of the candles, the crystal of the lustres, and the gilding of the walls. This calm, self-satisfied indifference in his rival seemed to disconcert Martial. Incapable of controlling his secret annoyance, he advanced toward Madame de Vaudremont to pay his respects to her. As he did so, Soulanges gave him a vacant look and turned away his head impertinently. Silence reigned for a moment in the salon, where curiosity seemed on tip-toe in every mind. The outstretched heads wore the oddest expressions; all present feared and expected one of those outbursts which well-bred persons seek to avoid.

Suddenly the pale face of the count became as scarlet as the facings of his uniform, and his eyes dropped to the floor as if to conceal the causes of his trouble. Observing the unknown lady in blue seated beneath the chandelier, he passed hurriedly in front of the master of petitions and took refuge in a card-room. Martial and the company present took this to mean

that Soulanges yielded the place to him, fearing the ridicule that always attends a dethroned lover. The master of petitions raised his head proudly, and his eyes fell upon the unknown lady. Then he seated himself coolly beside Madame de Vaudremont, listening to what she said with so abstracted a mind that he did not hear the words which that coquettish lady whispered behind her fan: —

"Martial, do me the favor not to wear, to-night, that ring which you got away from me. I have my reasons, which I will explain to you by and by; I want your arm, presently, to go to the Princesse de Wagram's."

"Why did you take that of the Comte de Soulanges to come here?" he said, hearing the end of her sentence.

"I met him on the portico," she replied; "but leave me now; people are watching us."

Martial rejoined Montcornet. The little blue lady had now become an object of disquietude in diverse forms to the colonel of cuirassiers, to Soulanges, Martial, and Madame de Vaudremont. When Martial flung his parting defiance at Montcornet, he rushed back to Madame de Vaudremont, whom he hastened to place in a brilliant quadrille. Under cover of the dance, which distracted his partner's attention, he fancied he could with impunity turn his attention to the charms of his new attraction. Although he succeeded in concealing from the active eyes of the countess the first glances that he threw at the little blue lady, he was soon discovered *in flagrante delicto*. At first he pretended absent-mindedness; then he made no response to the seductive advances by which the

countess seemed to say, "Do you love me to-night?" and the more dreamy and silent he seemed, the more pressing and provocative the countess became.

While Martial danced, Montcornet went from group to group seeking information as to the fair unknown. After exhausting all such resources in vain, he was thinking to profit by a moment when Madame de Gondreville seemed at liberty, and question her as to the name of the mysterious woman, when he noticed a slight opening, an empty space, between the column which held the candelabrum and the adjoining sofa. He seized the opportunity of a new dance to thread his way through the empty chairs which formed, as it were, a fortification defended by the mothers and the women of a certain age. He complimented the dowagers as he went along, and from woman to woman, and flattery to flattery, he reached, at last, the empty place his quick eye had seen beside the unknown lady. At the risk of being clawed by the griffins of the candelabrum he maintained that position to Martial's great displeasure. Too worldly wise to address at once the little blue lady, who was on his right, the colonel began operations by remarking to a tall and rather plain lady who sat on his left: —

"This, madame, has been a very fine ball! What luxury! So lively! On my honor, all the women present are handsome. If you are not dancing it must be that you don't like it."

This insipid conversation begun by the colonel had, of course, no other object than that of drawing into it his right-hand neighbor, who, silent and preoccupied, paid not the slightest attention to him. The officer held

in reserve a number of phrases which he meant to end with, "And you, madame?" on which he counted much. But he was strangely surprised, on looking round, to see tears in the lady's eyes, which appeared to be fastened on Madame de Vaudremont.

"Madame is, no doubt, married?" he ventured, presently, to say, in a hesitating voice.

"Yes, monsieur," replied the lady.

"And your husband is here?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Then why, madame, if I may ask, do you stay in this one place? Is it from coquetry?"

The lady smiled rather sadly.

"Grant me the honor of the next quadrille, and I will certainly not bring you back to this seat," said the colonel. "I see an empty sofa now near the fireplace; let us take it. When the mania of the day is for royalty, why should you abdicate the rank of queen of this ball to which your beauty entitles you?"

"Monsieur, I shall not dance."

The curt responses of the lady were so discouraging that the colonel began to think he should be forced to abandon the position. Martial, who guessed his request and the refusal he received, began to laugh and to stroke his chin with a hand on which the ring he wore shone brilliantly.

"What are you laughing at?" asked Madame de Vaudremont.

"The poor colonel's failure; he has just made such a fiasco!"

"I asked you to take off that ring," said the countess, suddenly interrupting him.

"I did n't hear you."

"If you can't hear, I observe that you can see everything, Monsieur le comte," retorted Madame de Vaudremont, in a piqued tone.

"There 's a young man who is wearing a very fine diamond," said the little blue lady, suddenly addressing the colonel.

"Magnificent!" he replied. "That young man is the Baron Martial de la Roche-Hugon, one of my most intimate friends."

"Thank you for telling me his name," she replied. "He seems very amiable."

"Yes, but rather thoughtless."

"One might almost think he was on close terms with Madame de Vaudremont," she said, in a questioning tone, and looking into the colonel's eyes, interrogatively.

"On the very closest," he replied.

The lady turned pale.

"Heavens!" thought the soldier, "she really does love that devil of a Martial."

"I thought Madame de Vaudremont was receiving the attentions of the Comte de Soulanges?" resumed the young woman, recovering, apparently, from the inward emotion which had paled her cheek.

"Yes, but the countess has been deserting him of late. You must have noticed poor Soulanges when he came in with her just now; he tries hard not to believe in her desertion."

"I saw him," said the blue lady; then she added, "I thank you," in a tone of voice equivalent to a dismissal.

At this moment the quadrille was just coming to an end, and the colonel, disappointed, had only time to beat a retreat, muttering to himself by way of consolation, "Well, at any rate, she is married."

"Ha, ha, courageous cuirassier," cried Martial, dragging the colonel to a window to breathe some fresh air. "How far have you advanced, hey?"

"She is married, my dear fellow."

"What has that got to do with it?"

"The deuce! why, I'm a moral man," replied the colonel. "I only take an interest in women I can marry. Besides, Martial, she notified me, formally, that she did not dance."

"Colonel, will you bet your dapple-gray horse against one hundred napoleons that she will not dance this evening with me?"

"Yes, that I will!" cried the colonel, striking his hand into that of the dandy. "Meantime I'll see Soulanges; I think he must know the little lady, for she seems to take an interest in him."

"Ah! my old fellow, you've lost," cried Martial, laughing. "My eyes have met hers; and I know what is what. Dear colonel, you won't be vexed with me if I dance with her after she refused you?"

"No, no! he laughs well who laughs last. I'm a bold player, and a good enemy. I'll give you a hint, Martial, that she likes diamonds."

As he said this, the two friends parted. Montcornet went toward the card-room, where he saw the Comte de Soulanges sitting at a *bouillotte* table. Though nothing existed between the two colonels more than the ordinary friendship of soldiers, based on the

perils of war and the duties of their profession, the colonel of cuirassiers was painfully affected on seeing the colonel of artillery engaged in an occupation which might ruin him. Piles of gold and bank-notes showed the fury of the game. A circle of silent men surrounded the players at the table. Certain words like "pass; play; hold; a thousand louis; held," echoed about the room, but to look at the five persons motionless at the table, a spectator would have said that their lips had not moved, and they had spoken with their eyes only.

When the colonel, alarmed at the count's paleness, approached him, he was winning. The Maréchal Duc d'Isomberg, and Keller the celebrated banker rose from the table completely stripped. Soulanges became still more gloomy as he gathered in the mass of gold and notes, which he did not count; a bitter disdain seemed to curl his lip, as if he threatened fortune rather than thanked her for such favors.

"Courage," said the colonel; "courage, Soulanges."

Then, thinking to do him a true service by enticing him away from the card-table, he added: "Come, I 've some good news to tell you — but on one condition."

"What condition?" asked Soulanges.

"That of answering a question I shall ask you."

The count rose abruptly, tied his winnings carelessly in the handkerchief he had been twisting convulsively, and joined the colonel. His face was so savage that none of the other players dared complain that he left them. Their own faces even expanded as soon as the sulky and sullen head was removed from the luminous circle which a *bouillotte* lamp casts upon a table.

"Those devils of soldiers understand each other like thieves at a fair," said a diplomatist, in a low voice, taking the count's seat.

"My dear Soulanges," said Montcornet, drawing the count into a corner, "the Emperor praised you very much this morning, and your promotion to the marshalship is beyond a doubt."

"The master does n't like the artillery."

"No; but he adores nobility, and you are a *ci-devant!* The master," continued Montcornet, "said that those who had married in Paris during the campaign were not to be considered as under a cloud. Well?"

The count seemed not to understand this speech.

"Now, in return for all that," resumed the colonel, "I want you to tell me if you know a charming little woman who is sitting over there by the candelabrum."

At these words the count's eyes flashed, and he seized the colonel's hand with extreme violence.

"My dear general," he said, in a voice that was noticeably changed, "if any man but you had asked me that question I would have split his skull with this mass of gold. Leave me, I entreat. I have more desire to blow out my brains than to — I hate everything, and every one. I am going. This gayety, this music, this crowd of stupid laughing faces kill me —"

"My poor friend!" said Montcornet, in a gentle voice, "you are excited. What will you say if I tell you that Martial cares so little for Madame de Vaudremont that he has fallen in love with that little lady in blue?"

"If he speaks to her," cried Soulanges, stuttering

with rage, "I 'll make him as flat as his own portfolio, whether he 's in the Emperor's inner circle or not."

So saying, the count dropped, as if annihilated, on the sofa to which the colonel had brought him. The latter slowly withdrew; he saw that Soulanges was a prey to anger much too violent for the talk or jests of a mere acquaintance to calm him.

When Montcornet re-entered the great ball-room, Madame de Vaudremont was the first person on whom his eyes rested, and he noticed on her face, usually very calm, the unmistakable signs of an ill-disguised agitation; a chair being vacant beside her, the colonel sat down in it.

"I 'll wager that you are annoyed," he said.

"A mere trifle, general. I wanted to get away from here; I have promised to be at the ball of the Grand-duchess of Berg, and I must go first to the Princesse de Wagram. Monsieur de la Roche-Hugon, who knows that, and whom I asked to escort me, is amusing himself with gallant speeches to those dowagers."

"That is not altogether the subject of your annoyance. I 'll bet a hundred louis that you will stay here the rest of the evening."

"Oh! what impertinence!"

"So I 'm right, am I?"

"Well, well; then tell me what I *am* thinking of," said the countess, giving a little tap with her fan on the colonel's fingers. "I am capable of rewarding you if you guess right."

"I can't accept that challenge, for I am too sure that I am right."

"What presumption!"

"You dislike seeing Martial at the feet of —"

"Of whom?" asked the countess, affecting surprise.

"That candelabrum," replied the colonel, motioning toward the beautiful unknown, and looking at the countess with embarrassing attention.

"You 've guessed right," replied the coquettish creature, hiding her face behind her fan, with which she began to play. "Madame de Lansac, who, as you know, is as malicious as an old monkey," she continued, after a moment's silence, "has just told me that Monsieur de la Roche-Hugon runs serious danger in courting that mysterious lady, who has appeared here to-night like a kill-joy. I 'd rather see death itself than that face as cruelly pale and beautiful as a vision. I am convinced she is my evil genius. Madame de Lansac," she continued, after making a gesture of annoyance, "who goes to a ball to spy upon every one while pretending to be half asleep, has made me very uneasy. Martial shall pay dear for the game he is playing with me. Advise him, colonel, inasmuch as he is your friend, not to trouble me in this way."

"I have just seen a man who proposes to do nothing less than blow out Martial's brains if he says a word to the little blue lady. But I know Martial; such dangers only encourage him. Besides, there 's something else; he and I have bet —"

Here the colonel lowered his voice.

"Is that really true?" asked the countess.

"Upon my honor."

"Thanks, dear colonel," replied Madame de Vaudremont, giving him a glance full of coquetry.

"Will you do me the honor to dance with me?"

"Yes, but the second quadrille. While this one is being danced I must find out more about this intrigue; I must know who the little blue lady is. She looks clever."

The colonel, seeing that Madame de Vaudremont wished to be alone, departed, well satisfied with the manner in which he had opened his attack.

We often meet at balls and parties women like Madame de Lansac, who seem to be there like old mariners standing on a jetty to watch young sailors struggling against the storm. At this moment the old lady, who seemed to take an interest in the personages of our scene, could easily detect the annoyance under which the countess was laboring. That young coquette might flirt her fan graciously, smile on the men who bowed to her, and practise all the tricks a woman employs to hide emotion, but the dowager, one of the most *malicieuses* and perspicacious old duchesses which the eighteenth century had bequeathed to the nineteenth, could read to the bottom of her heart and thought. The old lady seemed to recognize with fellow-feeling the almost imperceptible motions which betrayed the workings of the young woman's soul. The slightest frown upon that pure white brow, the least visible curving of the coral lips were as plainly read by the duchess as the print of a book. From the depth of her sofa, which her gown voluminously filled, this coquette emeritus (though all the while talking with a diplomate who sought her society for the sake of the anecdotes she told so well) was admiring her old self in the charming widow; she

liked her, seeing how well she carried her vexation and the blow to her heart.

Madame de Vaudremont did really feel as much pain as she feigned gayety. She had thought she found in Martial a man of talent, on whom she could rely to embellish her life with the sweets of power. This evening she had seen her mistake, a mistake as injurious to her reputation in society as it was wounding to her self-love. In her, as in all women of that particular period, the suddenness of passions increased their ardor. Souls that live much and fast do not suffer less than those that spend themselves on a single affection. The fancy of the countess for Martial was recent, to be sure, but the most inept of surgeons knows that the amputation of a well limb is more painful than that of a diseased one. There was future ambition to be gratified in her liking for Martial, whereas her preceding coquetry with Soulanges had, of course, no real object, and was rather poisoned by his evident contrition.

The old duchess, who was watching for an opportunity to speak to the countess, now hastened to dismiss her ambassador; for, in presence of quarrelling lovers, all other interests pale, even for an old woman. Madame de Lansac began her attack by casting a most sardonic glance at Madame de Vaudremont, which made the young coquette tremble in dread of seeing her fate in the dowager's hands. There are looks that pass from woman to woman like torches brought upon the stage in the crisis of a tragedy. Persons must have known that old duchess to appreciate the terror which the play of her countenance now inspired in the

countess. Madame de Lansac was tall. Her features made one think, "There 's a woman who was handsome in her day." She covered her cheeks with so much rouge that her wrinkles scarcely showed; but her eyes, instead of receiving additional lustre from this mass of carmine, seemed only the more haggard. She wore an enormous number of diamonds, and dressed with enough taste not to seem ridiculous. Her pointed nose was epigrammatic. A set of well-preserved teeth gave to her mouth a sarcastic grin which recalled that of Voltaire. But the exquisite politeness of her manners softened the satirical turn of her ideas so much that she was never accused of actual malignancy.

Her old gray eyes now brightened, and she flung a triumphant look, accompanied by a smile which seemed to say: "I told you so!" across the room to the mysterious beauty sitting beneath the candelabrum, to whose cheek that look brought a flush of hope. This evident alliance between Madame de Lansac and the blue lady could not, of course, escape so practised an eye as that of Madame de Vaudremont, who saw a mystery behind it, which she suddenly resolved to penetrate.

At this moment the Baron de la Roche-Hugon, having questioned all the dowagers without ascertaining the name of the charming unknown, finally appealed in despair to the Comtesse de Gondreville, and received from her the following insufficient reply: —

"That is a lady whom the old Duchesse de Lansac introduced to me."

Turning to the sofa on which sat that ancient lady the master of petitions intercepted the glance of intel-

ligence she cast upon the fair unknown, and, although he stood rather ill in her graces, he determined to accost her. Observing the approach of the lively baron, the duchess smiled with sardonic mischief, and looked at Madame de Vaudremont with an air which made Montcornet, who was watching them, laugh.

"If that old bohemian takes a friendly tone," thought the baron, "she means to play me some ill-natured trick. Madame," he said, "I am told you are here to watch a precious treasure."

"Do you take me for a dragon?" asked the old lady. "But of whom are you speaking?" she added, in a honeyed tone which encouraged Martial.

"Of that little unknown lady whom the jealousy of all these coquettes has hemmed into that corner. You know her family, of course?"

"Yes," replied the duchess; "but what have you to do with a provincial heiress, married a year or two, a girl very well born, whom none of you know, and who never goes into society?"

"Why does n't she dance? She is very handsome. Will you make a treaty of peace with me? If you will deign to tell me all that I want to know, I swear to you that a request for the restitution of the Navarreins woods by the Special Domain shall be warmly urged upon the Emperor."

The younger branch of the house of Navarreins quarters the arms of Lansac, namely: azure cottized argent, flanked with six lance-heads in pale; and the liaison of the old dame with Louis XV. had given her husband the title of duke. Now, inasmuch as the Navarreins had not yet returned to France, the young

master of petitions was proposing nothing less than a piece of treachery to the duchess, by suggesting a claim to property belonging to the elder branch.

"Monsieur," she said, with deceptive gravity, "fetch me the Comtesse de Vaudremont. I promise to reveal to her the mystery that seems to make your unknown lady so interesting. See, the other men in the room are as curious about her as you. All eyes are on that candelabrum near which my *protégée* has modestly placed herself; she is receiving homages that the rest of the women are trying to snatch away from her. Lucky will he be who persuades her to dance with him — "

There she interrupted herself, and empaled the Comtesse de Vaudremont with one of those glances which say so plainly, "We are talking of you." Then she added, "I think you would rather hear the name of the lady from the lips of your beautiful countess than from mine."

The manner of the old duchess was so provocative that Madame de Vaudremont rose and came over to her, taking the chair which Martial offered. Without paying any heed to the young man, she said to the old lady, with a laugh: —

"I can see that you are talking of me; but there my intelligence stops; I don't know whether you are saying good or evil."

Madame de Lansac pressed the young woman's pretty hand in her withered and wrinkled claw as she whispered, in a tone of compassion, "Poor child!"

The two women looked at each other. Madame de Vaudremont perceived that Martial was in the way,

and she dismissed him with a curt and imperious, "Leave us!"

The master of petitions, not at all pleased to see his countess under the influence of the dangerous sybil who had summoned her, gave her one of those masculine looks, all-powerful to a blinded heart, but ridiculous to a woman when she begins to judge the man with whom she has been seriously inclined to fall in love.

"Do you assume to mimic the Emperor?" she said, turning her head half round to give the master of petitions an ironical glance.

Martial had too much knowledge of the world, and too much shrewdness and calculation to risk an open rupture with a woman who stood well at court, and in whose marriage the Emperor took an interest. He counted, moreover, on the jealousy he expected to awaken in her as the best means of discovering the reason of her sudden coldness; he therefore departed, the more willingly because a new quadrille was putting everybody in motion. Crossing his arms, he leaned against a console on the opposite side of the room, where he could watch attentively the interview of the two ladies. From time to time, he followed with his eyes the glances they both cast on the blue unknown. Comparing the countess with this new beauty whom mystery was rendering so attractive, the baron fell into a series of those odious calculations which are customary with men of gallantry; he wavered between a fortune to be gained, and a caprice to be satisfied. The reflection of the lights brought out so strongly his vexed and sombre face upon the white moire draperies

which his black hair brushed, that he might have been compared at that moment to an evil genius. From afar an observer would have said: "There 's another poor devil who does n't seem to be amusing himself."

The colonel, on the other hand, his right shoulder resting lightly against the casing of the door between the card-room and the ball-room, was laughing to himself behind his ample moustache. He enjoyed the pleasure of watching the tumult of the ball; he saw a hundred pretty heads swaying to the motions of the dance; he could read on some faces, as on those of the countess and his friend Martial, the secrets of their agitation. Then, turning his head, he asked himself what connection there could be between the gloomy humor of the Comte de Soulanges, still sitting where he left him, and the plaintive little lady on whose face what seemed to be the joys of hope and the agony of involuntary terror appeared alternately. Montcornet stood there like the king of the feast; he obtained in that moving picture a perfect view of society, and he laughed as he gathered in and replied to the self-interested smiles of a hundred brilliant women, — a colonel of the Imperial Guard, a post which carried with it the rank of a brigadier-general, was certainly one of the finest matches in the army.

It was now about midnight. The conversations, play, dance, coquetry, self-interests, mischief-making, and projects had severally reached that pitch of excitement which leads young men to exclaim: "What a fine ball!"

"My dear little angel," Madame de Lansac was

saying to the countess, "you are at an age when I committed many mistakes. I saw you suffering torture just now, and it came into my mind to give you a little advice. To make mistakes at twenty-two is to spoil our future; it is like tearing a gown we intend to put on. My dear, we often don't learn till too late how to wear our gown without either tearing or rumpling it. Continue, dear heart, to make yourself clever enemies, and let men without principle be your friends, and you 'll see what a pretty sort of life you 'll lead some day."

"Ah! madame, a woman finds it very difficult to be happy, does n't she?" exclaimed the countess, vehemently.

"My dear, she should, at your age, know how to choose between pleasures and happiness. You wish to marry Martial, who is neither fool enough to make a good husband nor passionate enough to be a lover. He has debts, my child; he is a man who will squander your fortune; but that would n't signify if he made you happy. He won't make you happy. Don't you see how old he is already. He is a broken man; he is living on his own remains. In three years there 'll be nothing left of him. Then he 'll take to ambition. He may succeed, but I don't believe it. What is he? A trimmer; who has a wonderful sense of current affairs, and talks agreeably; but he is far too conceited to have real merit; he 'll never go far. Look at him! can't you read on his forehead at this very moment that he is not thinking of you as a young and charming woman, but of the two millions which you possess? He does n't love you, my dear;

he calculates you as he would a matter of business. If you want to marry, take an older man who has won the consideration of the world and is half-way on in his career. A widow ought not to make her second marriage a mere love-tale. Mice are not caught in the same trap twice. Now, a new marriage ought to be, in its way, a speculation on your side; you ought, in remarrying, to have a prospect, at least, of being Madame la maréchale."

The eyes of both women fixed themselves at that moment, spontaneously, on the noble figure of General Montcornet.

"If, on the other hand, you prefer to play the difficult rôle of a coquette and not marry at all," continued the duchess, with much kindliness, "ah! my poor little girl, you 'll know, better than most women, how to heap up the clouds of a tempest and dissipate them. But, I conjure you, never make it your pride and pleasure to disturb the peace of a home, to destroy the union of families, and the happiness of women who are happy. I played that dangerous game, my child. Good God! for a triumph of vanity women will murder the hearts of some poor virtuous creatures, — for there are, in this world, virtuous women, — and create for themselves eternal hatreds. Too late I learned, as the Duke of Alba said, that a salmon is worth a thousand frogs. Believe me, a true love gives far more enjoyment than the ephemeral passions which we like to excite. Well, I came here to-night to preach this to you. Yes, you are the cause of my apparition in this salon, which, if you 'll excuse the word, stinks of the populace. In the olden time, my

dear, we might receive such people in a boudoir, but in a salon — fy! Why do you look at me with that astonished air? Now listen to me," resumed the old lady. "If you want to play with men, endeavor to convulse the hearts of those only whose life is free, those who have no duties to perform. The others never pardon us the wrongs we make them commit. Profit by that maxim of my old experience. Poor Soulanges, for instance, whose head you have turned, and whom for the last few months you have completely intoxicated, heaven knows how! well, do you know what you have been destroying? — his whole life. He has been married two years; he is adored by a charming little creature whom he loves and yet betrays; she lives in tears and bitter silence. Soulanges has moments of the sharpest remorse, all the sharper that he has not found much comfort in his pleasure — you little trickster, you have betrayed him! Well, now come and see your work."

The old duchess took the hand of the young countess and they both rose.

"See," said Madame de Lansac, pointing out to her companion by a glance the pale and trembling lady beneath the candelabrum, "that is my great-niece, the Comtesse de Soulanges. She has yielded to my entreaties, and has come here to-night from a saddened home, where the presence of her child is but a feeble consolation of her sorrow. Do you see her? You think her charming? Well, dear heart, think what she might be if happiness and love were glowing in that face that is now fading."

The countess silently turned away her head, and

seemed lost in grave reflections. The duchess took her to the door of the card-room, and there, having looked within as if seeking some one, she said to the young coquette, in a deep tone of voice, "And there is Soulanges!"

The countess shuddered as she saw in the least-lighted corner of the room the pale, drawn face of the young man lying back on a sofa; the dejection of his attitude and the gloom upon his brow proved only too plainly his inward suffering. The players went and came before him, but he paid no more attention to them than a dead man might. The picture thus presented of the sorrowing wife and the gloomy, dejected husband, parted one from the other in the midst of this fête like two halves of a tree struck by lightning, had something in it that seemed prophetic to the countess; was it the image of a future vengeance? Her heart was not so spoiled as yet that kindliness and right feeling were banished from it. She pressed the hand of the old duchess and thanked her with a smile that had a certain childlike charm.

"Dear heart," said the old woman, "remember in future that we can repulse the homage of men as easily as we attract it." Then, as she passed Montcornet, she said, under her breath, "She is yours if you are not a ninny."

The words were whispered in the colonel's ear while the beautiful countess was still absorbed in the compassion inspired by the appearance of Soulanges, whom she really loved sufficiently to wish to make him happy. She began to think of employing the irresistible power of her fascinations to send him back to his wife.

"Oh! how I will preach to him!" she said to Madame de Lansac.

"Do nothing of the kind, my dear!" cried the duchess, regaining her sofa. "Choose a good husband and shut your door to my nephew. Don't even offer him your friendship. Believe me, my child, a woman does not willingly receive from another woman the heart of her husband; she wants to win him back herself. In bringing my niece here I think I gave her an excellent means of regaining her husband's affection. What I ask of you, as your co-operative share, is to fascinate the colonel."

And she nodded in the direction of Martial's friend; the countess laughed.

"Well, madame, do you at last know the name of that mysterious lady?" asked the baron, in a piqued tone, as soon as the countess was alone.

"Yes, I do," said Madame de Vaudremont, looking straight at the master of petitions.

Her face expressed mischief as well as gayety. The smile which flickered on her lips and dimpled her cheek, and the liquid light in her eyes were like the dancing will-o'-the-wisps which decoy a traveller. Martial, thinking himself beloved, fell into that self-satisfied attitude which a man so complacently assumes toward the woman who loves him, and said, with his natural fatuity: —

"You will not be angry with me, will you, if I seem to attach great value to the knowledge of that lady's name?"

"And you must not be angry," replied Madame de Vaudremont, "if I refuse to tell it to you, and forbid

you to make the slightest advance toward that young lady. You might risk your life."

"Madame, to lose your good graces is to lose more than life."

"Martial," said the countess, severely, "that is Madame de Soulanges; the husband will blow your brains out — if you have any."

"Ha, ha!" laughed the dandy; "the husband lets the man who has won your heart go free, but wants to fight him on his wife's account! What a reversal of principle! I entreat you, allow me one dance with that little woman. You will thus gain proof of how little love his icy heart has ever felt for you; for if Soulanges is angry when I dance with his wife after — "

"She is married, I tell you."

"Obstacle the more which I shall have the pleasure of overcoming."

"But she loves her husband."

"Absurd objection!"

"Ah!" said the countess, with a bitter smile, "you men punish us for our faults and our repentances also."

"Don't be angry," said Martial, hastily. "Oh! I entreat you, forgive me. Come, I won't think anything more about her."

"You deserve that I should send you to her now."

"I 'm going," said the baron, smiling, "but I shall come back more in love with you than ever. You will see that the prettiest woman in the world can't obtain a heart that belongs to you."

"I see that you want to win the colonel's horse."

"Ah! the traitor," he replied, laughing, and threatening the colonel, who now came up to them, with his finger. But as he yielded his seat to his friend, he said, in a sardonic tone: "Madame, this is a man who has boasted that he can win your good graces in a single evening."

As he walked away he congratulated himself on having stirred up the pride of the countess and spoiled Montcornet's chances; for, in spite of his habitual shrewdness, he had not detected the covert sarcasm of Madame de Vaudremont's remarks to him; and he did not see that she was really making as many steps toward his friend as his friend was taking toward her, though both were unconscious of it.

At the moment when the master of petitions began to hover round the particular candelabrum near which the Comtesse de Soulanges, pale and anxious, and seeming to live in her eyes only, was still sitting, her husband appeared in the doorway, his eyes sparkling with anger. The old duchess, watchful of all, came up to her nephew and asked for his arm to take her to her carriage, pretending to be bored to death, but really anxious to prevent an unpleasant outbreak. Before leaving the room she made a singular sign of intelligence to her niece, motioning to the enterprising baron who was hovering near, — a sign which seemed to say: "Now, then, revenge yourself."

Madame de Vaudremont intercepted that look; a sudden gleam illuminated her mind; she feared she was the dupe of the wily old woman so trained to intrigue.

"That perfidious duchess," she said to herself,

"may have thought it amusing to lecture me while playing some mischievous trick after her kind."

At this thought Madame de Vaudremont's pride became more interested than even her curiosity in unravelling the threads of the intrigue; and the secret preoccupation of her mind scarcely allowed her to be mistress of herself. The colonel, interpreting to his own advantage the embarrassment visible in the manners and language of the countess, became more and more assiduous and pressing. Old and *blasés* diplomatists who amuse themselves by watching the play of countenances could seldom meet with more intrigues to watch and fathom than in the course of this evening.

The baron at last managed to obtain a seat beside the Comtesse de Soulanges. His eyes wandered furtively over a throat cool as the dew, sweet as a wild-flower. He admired, close at hand, the beauties that surprised him from afar. He saw a tiny foot well shod; he measured with his eye that supple, graceful waist. In those days women made their waists directly beneath their bosoms, in imitation of Greek statues, — a pitiless and fatal fashion for those whose forms were defective. Casting a furtive glance upon that bosom, Martial was enchanted with the perfection of the lady's figure.

"You have not danced once this evening, madame," he said, in a soft and flattering voice; "not for want of partners, I am very sure."

"I do not go into society, and I am therefore unknown," replied Madame de Soulanges, coldly, for she had not comprehended the glance by which her aunt invited her to coquette with the baron.

Martial was at that moment playing with the diamond ring which adorned his left hand. The glitter of the stones seemed to send a sudden gleam into the soul of the young woman, who colored high and cast an indefinable look upon the baron.

"Do you like dancing?" he said, by way of renewing the conversation.

"Oh! very much, monsieur."

At this strange, eager answer their glances met. The baron, surprised by the tones of her voice, which roused a vague hope in his heart, now questioned the eyes of the young lady.

"Then, madame, I trust it is not temerity on my part to ask to be your partner in the next quadrille."

An artless confusion colored the white cheeks of the pretty countess.

"But, monsieur, I have just refused a gentleman, a soldier— "

"Was it that tall colonel of cuirassiers you see over there?"

"Precisely."

"Oh! he is my best friend; you need fear nothing. Will you grant me the favor I have asked?"

"Yes, monsieur."

The tones of her voice revealed so strong and sudden an emotion that even the master of petitions was startled. He felt reduced to the timidity of a schoolboy, he lost his cool assurance, his Southern brain flared up, he tried to speak, but his words seemed to him awkward compared with the sparkling repartees of Madame de Soulanges. It was lucky for him that the quadrille soon began. Standing beside his beauti-

ful partner he grew more at his ease. To many men dancing is a method of action; they think that by displaying the graces of their figure they affect the hearts of women more powerfully than by the charms of their mind. Martial was, no doubt, intending to employ all methods of seduction, judging by the coxcombry of his motions and gestures. He now led his conquest to her place in a certain quadrille to which the most distinguished women in the room attached a fanciful importance, preferring it to all others. While the orchestra performed the prelude to the opening figure, the baron looked about him with incredible satisfaction to his pride, passing in review all the other ladies of that formidable square, and perceiving that his partner's dress rivalled even that of the Comtesse de Vaudremont, who, by an accident (well-contrived, perhaps), proved to be the *vis-à-vis* of the baron and his blue lady.

The eyes of all the dancers rested for a moment on Madame de Soulanges; a flattering murmur proved that she was the topic of conversation; admiring, and even envious glances came so thickly upon her that, ashamed of a triumph she seemed to decline, the young woman modestly lowered her eyes and blushed, which made her the more attractive. When she raised her white eyelids it was only to look at her intoxicated partner, as if, so he thought, she wished to convey to him the homage she had won and let him know that his was the flattery she preferred. She seemed to give herself up with innocent coquetry to that naïve admiration by which young love begins. When she danced, the spectators might well have believed she

was displaying her graces for Martial only; and, though modest, and new to the manœuvres of salons, she seemed to know, as well as the most practised coquette, how and when to raise her eyes to his, and when to lower them with feigned reserve.

When the rules of a new quadrille invented by the dancer Trénis (to which he gave his name) brought Martial alone in front of Montcornet, he said, laughing: —

"I have won your horse."

"Yes, but you have lost eighty thousand francs a year," replied the colonel, with a sign toward Madame de Vaudremont.

"What 's that to me?" said Martial. "Madame de Soulanges compensates for millions."

By the end of this quadrille much whispering went on from ear to ear. The plainest women moralized with their partners on the dawning intimacy of Martial and the blue lady. The beauties affected surprise at its suddenness. The men declared that they could n't understand the success of that little master of petitions, in whom, for their parts, they could see nothing attractive. A few indulgent women said it was unreasonable to judge the lady so hastily; it would be most unfortunate for young women if an expressive glance, or a gracefully danced figure were enough to compromise them.

Martial alone knew the extent of his success. In the last figure of the quadrille, when the ladies form the *moulinet*, he was certain that he felt, through the soft and perfumed kid of her glove, the gentle fingers of the young woman replying to his amorous appeal.

"Madame," he said, the moment the dance was over, "pray don't return to that odious corner where you have buried until now your face and your toilet. Is admiration the only return you seek for those splendid jewels which adorn your throat and your exquisitely braided hair? Come and take a turn through the salons to enjoy the ball and your own effect."

Madame de Soulanges followed her partner, who thought she might be more surely won if he succeeded in exhibiting their intimacy. Together they took several turns through the groups that crowded the various salons. The countess, apparently uneasy, always paused a moment before entering each salon, and did not advance until she had cast a glance over all the men who were in it. This fear, which filled the master of petitions with delight, seemed to calm itself when he assured her, "You need not be uneasy; *he* is not there."

Presently they reached the large picture-gallery, in one of the wings of the mansion where supper had been laid for three hundred guests. As the feast was about to begin, Martial drew the countess toward an oval boudoir opening out upon the gardens, where the rarest flowers and a few choice shrubs made a perfumed bower beneath a mass of brilliant blue draperies. The echoes of the ball died away there. Here the countess hesitated, and refused at first to follow the young man; but casting a glance into a mirror on the wall, she probably saw that there were witnesses in the room, for she suddenly changed her mind, and sat down with sufficiently good grace upon an ottoman.

"This room is delightful," she said, looking up at the sky-blue hangings which were roped with pearls.

"All is love and pleasure," murmured the young man, in tones of emotion.

Taking advantage of the half-light to gaze closely at the countess, he saw upon her face an expression of trouble, shyness, and desire which enchanted him. The young woman smiled, and the smile seemed to put an end to a struggle of feelings within her soul; she touched the left hand of her adorer and looked at the ring on which her eyes had already fastened.

"What a beautiful diamond!" she said, with the artless expression of a girl who betrays the temptation that a bauble is to her.

Martial, much moved by the involuntary but intoxicating caress of the countess's hand upon his own, looked at her with eyes as dazzling as the diamond itself.

"Wear it," he said, taking off the ring, "in memory of this celestial hour, and for love of — "

She looked at it with such ecstasy that he kissed her hand.

"Do you give it to me?" she said, in a tone of surprise.

"I would fain give you the whole world."

"You are not jesting?" she continued, in a voice which betrayed her keen satisfaction.

"Will you accept my diamond only?"

"You will not take it back?" she asked.

"Never."

She put the ring upon her finger. Martial, sure of his coming happiness, made a gesture as if to pass

his arm about her waist, but the countess suddenly rose, and said, in a clear voice, without the slightest emotion: —

"Monsieur, I accept this diamond with all the less scruple because it belongs to me."

The master of petitions was confounded.

"Monsieur de Soulanges took it lately from my dressing-table and told me he had mislaid it."

"You are wrong, madame," said Martial, in a piqued tone. "I received it from Madame de Vaudremont."

"Precisely," she replied, smiling. "My husband borrowed the ring of me, he gave it to her, and she has given it to you; my ring has travelled, that is all. It can tell me now, perhaps, what I may have ignored, — the secret of pleasing. Monsieur," she continued, gravely, "if it had not been mine, be assured that I should not have risked so much to recover it; for a young woman is, they say, in danger from your attentions. But," she added, laughing, and touching a secret spring beneath the diamond, "see, my husband's hair is still in it."

So saying, she darted away through the salons with such rapidity that he saw it was useless to attempt to follow her, and, moreover, he was no longer in a mood to continue the adventure. The lady's laugh was echoed in the room itself, where, ensconced behind two shrubs, the coxcomb now beheld the colonel and Madame de Vaudremont, who were laughing heartily.

"Will you have my horse to run after your conquest?" said the colonel.

The good grace with which the baron accepted the

jests Madame de Vaudremont and Montcornet now rained down upon him, earned him their silence upon this scene, where a charger was won in exchange for a young, and pretty, and wealthy widow.

As the Comtesse de Soulanges was driven home through the space that separates the Chaussée-d'Antin from the faubourg Saint-Germain, where she lived, her soul was filled with the keenest anxiety. Before leaving the hôtel Gondreville, she had gone through all the salons without being able to find either her aunt or her husband, who, as we know, had left the ball before her. Dreadful presentiments now tortured her innocent soul. A silent witness of the sufferings her husband had endured from the day when Madame de Vaudremont attached him to her chariot, she had confidently hoped that a coming repentance would bring him back to her. It was therefore with great repugnance that she agreed to a plan laid by her aunt, Madame de Lansac, and she now feared that in doing so she had committed an irreparable fault. The events of the evening had depressed her candid soul. Alarmed at the gloomy, suffering air of her husband, she was still more alarmed by the beauty of her rival, and the corruption of society which she saw about her. Crossing the pont Royal she flung away the desecrated hair contained in the ring once given as the pledge of a pure love. She wept as she recalled the sufferings she had lived through for months, and shuddered at the thought of a wife's duty which requires her, if she would retain the peace of her home, to bury in her heart, without uttering a complaint, the cruel agony she was now enduring.

"Alas!" she thought, "how should women act who love their husbands? Where is the source of their peace of mind? I do not believe, as my aunt tells me, that mere reason is sufficient to support them under such a trial."

She sighed as the chasseur let down the steps of the carriage, from which she sprang into the vestibule of her house. Thence she ran quickly upstairs; but when she reached her room she trembled in every limb on seeing her husband sitting by the fireplace, and evidently waiting for her.

"Since when, my dear," he said, in a high and strained voice, "have you thought it right to go to a ball without letting me know of your intention. Let me tell you that a wife is out of place in public unless accompanied by her husband. You compromised yourself strangely in that dark corner where you chose to put yourself."

"Oh! my good Léon," she said, in a caressing voice, her eyes sparkling with satisfaction, "I could n't resist the pleasure of seeing you without your seeing me. My aunt took me to the ball; and I have been very happy there."

These words disarmed the jealous anger of the count; all the more because he had been making some bitter reproaches to himself while dreading his wife's return. No doubt, he thought, she was informed at the ball of an infidelity he had hoped to conceal from her knowledge, and, like other lovers, he rushed into jealousy himself, hoping to be the first to cast reproaches, and so evade the blame that was justly due to him. He now looked silently at his wife, who, in her brilliant

evening dress, seemed to him more beautiful than ever; and the thought brought a smile to his face. Happy in that smile, and glad to find her husband in a room where, of late, he had come but seldom, the countess looked at him tenderly. This clemency so enraptured Soulanges, coming, as it did, after the tortures he had gone through at the ball, that he seized his wife's hand and kissed it gratefully; how often we find true gratitude in love!

"Hortense, what is that on your finger that scratched my lip?" he said, laughing.

"That," she said, "is my diamond ring, "which you said was lost, but which I have recovered."

General Montcornet did not marry Madame de Vaudremont. in spite of the good understanding established between them in the course of this evening, for the countess was one of the victims of that dreadful conflagration which made the ball of the Austrian ambassador, on the occasion of Napoleon's marriage with the Archduchess Maria-Louisa, forever celebrated.

THE END.

MODESTE MIGNON.

TRANSLATED BY

KATHARINE PRESCOTT WORMELEY.

In "Modeste Mignon" we still have that masterly power of analysis, keen, incisive, piercing superficiality and pretence, as a rapier pierces a doublet, but we have in addition the purity and sweetness of a genuine light comedy, — a comedy which has for its central object the delineation of the mysteries of a young girl's mind.

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BALZAC IN ENGLISH.

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[From *Le Livre, Revue du Monde Littéraire*, Paris, March, 1889.]

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SONS OF THE SOIL.

Translated by Katharine Prescott Wormeley.

Many critics have regarded "Les Paysans," to which Miss Wormeley, in her admirable translation, has given the title "Sons of the Soil," as one of Balzac's strongest novels; and it cannot fail to impress those who read this English rendering of it. Fifty or sixty years ago Balzac made a profound study of the effects produced by the Revolution upon the peasants of the remote provinces of France, and he has here elaborated these observations in a powerful picture of one of those strange, disguised, but ferocious social wars which were at the time not only rendered possible, but promoted by three potent influences, namely, the selfishness of the rich landholders; the land-hunger and stimulated greed of the peasants; and the calculated rapacity of middle-class capitalists, craftily using the hatreds of the poor to forward their own plots. The first part of "Les Paysans" (and the only part which was published during the author's life) appeared under a title taken from an old and deeply significant proverb, *Qui a terre a guerre*, — "Who has land has war."

It is the account of a guerilla war conducted by a whole country-side against one great land-owner, — a war in which, moreover, the lawless aggressions of the peasantry are prompted, supported, and directed by an amazing alliance between the richest, most unscrupulous, and most powerful of the neighboring provincial magnates, who, by controlling, through family council, the local administration, are in a position to paralyze resistance to their conspiracy. The working out of this deep plot affords the author opportunity for the introduction of a whole gallery of marvellous studies.

It is perhaps hardly necessary to say that this powerful and absorbing story is lifted above the level of romance by the unequalled artistic genius of the author, and that it is at times almost transformed into a profound political study by the depth and acumen of his suggestions and comments. Nor should it be requisite to point out analogies with territorial conditions in more than one other country, which lend to "Les Paysans" a special interest and significance, and are likely to prevent it from becoming obsolete for a long time to come. Of the translation it only need be said that it is as good as Miss Wormeley has accustomed us to expect, and that means the best rendering of French into English that has ever been done. — *New York Tribune.*

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The six stories, admirably translated by Miss Wormeley, afford good examples of Balzac's work in what not a few critics have thought his chief specialty. It is certain that no writer of many novels wrote so many short stories as he; and it is equally as certain that his short stories are, almost without an exception, models of what such compositions ought to be. . . . No modern author, however, of any school whatever, has succeeded in producing short stories half so good as Balzac's best. Balzac did not, indeed, attempt to display his subtility and deftness by writing short stories about nothing. Every one of his tales contains an episode, not necessarily, but usually, a dramatic episode. The first in the present collection, better known as "La Maison du Chat-qui-pelote," is really a short novel. It has all the machinery, all the interest, all the detail of a regular story. The difference is that it is compressed as Balzac only could compress; that here and there important events, changes, etc., are indicated in a few powerful lines instead of being elaborated; that the vital points are thrown into strong relief. Take the pathetic story of "Colonel Chabert." It begins with an elaboration of detail. The description of the lawyer's office might seem to some too minute. But it is the stage upon which the Colonel is to appear, and when he enters we see the value of the preliminaries, for a picture is presented which the memory seizes and holds. As the action progresses, detail is used more parsimoniously, because the *mise-en-scene* has already been completed, and because, also, the characters once clearly described, the development of character and the working of passion can be indicated with a few pregnant strokes. Notwithstanding this increasing economy of space, the action takes on a swifter intensity, and the culmination of the tragedy leaves the reader breathless.

In "The Atheist's Mass" we have quite a new kind of story. This is rather a psychological study than a narrative of action. Two widely distinguished characters are thrown on the canvas here, — that of the great surgeon and that of the humble patron; and one knows not which most to admire, the vigor of the drawing, or the subtle and lucid psychical analysis. In both there is rare beauty of soul, and perhaps, after all, the poor Auvergnat surpasses the eminent surgeon, though this is a delicate and difficult question. But how complete the little story is; how much it tells; with what skill, and in how delightful a manner! Then there is that tremendous haunting legend of "La Grande Bretèche," a story which has always been turned into more languages and twisted into more new forms than almost any other of its kind extant. What author has equalled the continuing horror of that unfaithful wife's agony, compelled to look on and assist at the slow murder of her entrapped lover? . . Then the death of the husband and wife, — the one by quick and fiercer dissipation, the other by simple refusal to live longer, — and the abandonment of the accursed dwelling to solitude and decay, complete a picture, which for vividness, emotional force, imaginative power, and comprehensiveness of effects, can be said to have few equals in its own class of fiction. — *Kansas City Journal.*

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It makes very interesting reading at this distance of time, however; and Balzac has given to the legendary account much of the solidity of history by his adroit manipulation. For the main story it must be said that the action is swifter and more varied than in many of the author's books, and that there are not wanting many of those cameo-like portraits necessary to warn the reader against slovenly perusal of this carefully written story; for the complications are such, and the relations between the several plots involved so intricate, that the thread might easily be lost and much of the interest be thus destroyed. The usual Balzac compactness is of course present throughout, to give body and significance to the work, and the stage is crowded with impressive figures. It would be impossible to find a book which gives a better or more faithful illustration of one of the strangest periods in French history, in short; and its attraction as a story is at least equalled by its value as a true picture of the time it is concerned with. The translation is as spirited and close as Miss Wormeley has taught us to expect in this admirable series. — *New York Tribune.*

One of the most intensely interesting novels that Balzac ever wrote is *An Historical Mystery*, whose translation has just been added to the preceding novels that compose the "Comédie Humaine" so admirably translated by Miss Katharine Prescott Wormeley. The story opens in the autumn of 1803, in the time of the Empire, and the motive is in deep-laid political plots, which are revealed with the subtle and ingenious skill that marks the art of Balzac. . . . The story is a deep-laid political conspiracy of the secret service of the ministry of the police. Talleyrand, M'lle de Cinq-Cygne, the Princess de Cadigan, Louis XVIII., as well as Napoleon, figure as characters of this thrilling historic romance. An absorbing love-story is also told, in which State intrigue plays an important part. The character-drawing is faithful to history, and the story illuminates French life in the early years of the century as if a calcium light were thrown on the scene.

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Albert Savarus, with Paz (La Fausse Maitresse) and Madame Firmiani. By Honoré de Balzac. Translated by Katharine Prescott Wormeley.

There is much in this, one of the most remarkable of his books, which is synonymous with Balzac's own life. It is the story of a man's first love for woman, his inspirer, the source from whom he derives his power of action. It also contains many details on his habits of life and work.

The three short stories in this volume,—'Albert Savarus,' 'Paz' and 'Madame Firmiani'—are chips from that astounding workshop which never ceased its Hephœstian labors and products until Balzac was no more. Short stories of this character flew from his glowing forge like sparks from an anvil, the playthings of an idle hour, the interludes of a more vivid drama. Three of them gathered here illustrate as usual Parisian and provincial life, two in a very noble fashion, Balzacian to the core. The third—'Albert Savarus'—has many elements of tragedy and grandeur in it, spoiled only by an abruptness in the conclusion and an accumulation of unnecessary horrors that chill the reader. It is a block of tragic marble hewn, not to a finish, but to a fine prophetic suggestion of what is to follow if ——! The *if* never emerges from conditionality to fulfilment. The beautiful lines and sinuous curves of the nascent statue are there, not fully born of the encasing stone; what sculptors call the 'tenons' show in all their visibility—the supports and scaffoldings reveal their presence; the forefront is finished as in a Greek metope or Olympian tympanum, where broken Lapiths and Centaurs disport themselves; but the background is rude and primitive.

In 'Madame Firmiani' a few brilliant pages suffice to a perfect picture,—one of the few spotless pictures of this superb yet sinning magician so rich in pictures. It is French nature that Balzac depicts, warm with all the physical impulses, undisguised in its assaults on the soul, ingeniously sensual, odiously loose in its views of marriage and the marriage relation, but splendidly picturesque. In this brief romance noble words are wedded to noble music. In 'Paz' an almost equal nobility of thought—the nobility of self-renunciation—is attained. Balzac endows his men and women with happy millions and unhappy natures: the red ruby—the broken heart—blazes in a setting of gold. 'Paz,' the sublime Pole who loves the wife of his best friend, a Slav Crœsus, is no exception to the rule. The richest rhetoric, the sunniest colors, fail to counteract the Acherontian gloom of these lives and sorrows snatched from the cauldron of urban and rural France,—a cauldron that burns hotter than any other with its strange Roman and Celtic ardors. Balzac was perpetually dipping into it and drawing from it the wonderful and extraordinary incidents of his novels, incidents often monstrous in their untruth if looked at from any other than a French point of view. Thus, the devilish ingenuity of the jealous woman in 'Albert Savarus' would seem unnatural anywhere else than in the sombre French provinces of 1836,—a toadstool sprung up in the rank moonlight of the religious conventual system of education for women; but there, and then, and as one result of this system of repression, it seems perfectly natural. And so does the beautiful self-abnegation of Albert himself, that high-strung soul that could have been born only in nervous and passionate France.

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A MEMOIR OF HONORÉ DE BALZAC.

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A complete life of Balzac can probably never be written. The sole object of the present volume is to present Balzac to American readers. This memoir is meant to be a presentation of the man, — and not of his work, except as it was a part of himself, — derived from authentic sources of information, and presented in their own words, with such simple elucidations as a close intercourse with Balzac's mind, necessitated by conscientious translation, naturally gives. The portrait in this volume was considered by Madame de Balzac the best likeness of her husband.

Miss Wormeley's discussion of the subject is of value in many ways, and it has long been needed as a help to comprehension of his life and character. Personally, he lived up to his theory. His life was in fact austere. Any detailed account of the conditions under which he worked, such as are given in this volume, will show that this must have been the case; and the fact strongly reinforces the doctrine. Miss Wormeley, in arranging her account of his career, has, almost of necessity, made free use of the letters and memoir published by Balzac's sister, Madame Surville. She has also, whenever it would serve the purpose of illustration better, quoted from the sketches of him by his contemporaries, wisely rejecting the trivialities and frivolities by the exaggeration of which many of his first chroniclers seemed bent upon giving the great author a kind of opera-bouffe aspect. To judge from some of these accounts, he was flighty, irresponsible, possibly a little mad, prone to lose touch of actualities by the dominance of his imagination, fond of wild and impracticable schemes, and altogether an eccentric and unstable person. But it is not difficult to prove that Balzac was quite a different character; that he possessed a marvellous power of intellectual organization; that he was the most methodical and indefatigable of workers; that he was a man of a most delicate sense of honor; that his life was not simply devoted to literary ambition, but was a martyrdom to obligations which were his misfortune, but not his fault.

All this Miss Wormley has well set forth; and in doing so she has certainly relieved Balzac of much unmerited odium, and has enabled those who have not made a study of his character and work to understand how high the place is in any estimate of the helpers of modern progress and enlightenment to which his genius and the loftiness of his aims entitle him. This memoir is a very modest biography, though a very good one. The author has effaced herself as much as possible, and has relied upon "documents" whenever they were trustworthy. — *N. Y. Tribune.*

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PIERRETTE

AND

THE VICAR OF TOURS.

BY HONORÉ DE BALZAC.

Translated by Katharine Prescott Wormeley.

In *Pierrette*, which Miss Wormeley has added to her series of felicitous translations from the French master-fictionists, Balzac has made within brief compass a marvellously sympathetic study of the martyrdom of a young girl. Pierrette, a flower of Brittany, beautiful, pale, and fair and sweet, is taken as an undesired charge by sordid-minded cousins in Provins, and like an exotic transplanted into a harsh and sour soil she withers and fades under the cruel conditions of her new environment. Incidentally Balzac depicts in vivid colors the struggles of two shop-keepers — a brother and sister, who have amassed a little fortune in Paris — to gain a foothold among the bourgeoisie of their native town. These two become the prey of conspirators for political advancement, and the rivalries thus engendered shake the small provincial society to its centre. But the charm of the tale is in the portrayal of the character of Pierrette, who understands only how to love, and who cannot live in an atmosphere of suspicion and ill-treatment. The story is of course sad, but its fidelity to life and the pathos of it are elements of unfailing interest. Balzac brings a score or more of people upon the stage, shows each one as he or she really is both in outward appearance and inward nature, and then allows motives and circumstances to work out an inevitable result. To watch this process is like being present at some wonderful chemical experiment where the ingredients are mixed with a deft and careful hand, and combine to produce effects of astonishing significance. The social genesis of the old maid in her most abhorrent form occupies much of Balzac's attention in *Pierrette*, and this theme also has a place in the story of *The Vicar of Tours*, bound up in this same volume. The vicar is a simple-minded priest who is happy enough till he takes up his quarters with an old maid landlady, who pesters and annoys him in many ways, and finally sends him forth despoiled of his worldly goods and a laughing-stock for the country-side. There is a great deal of humor in the tale, but one must confess that the humor is of a rather heavy sort, it being weighed down by a dominant satirical purpose. — *The Beacon.*

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For her latest translation of the Balzac fiction cycle, Miss Wormeley gives us the first and third parts of "Illusion Perdue," under the caption of "Lost Illusions," namely, "The Two Poets" and "Eve and David." This arrangement is no doubt a good one, for the readers are thus enabled to follow the consecutive fortunes of the Angouleme folk, while the adventures of Eve's poet-brother, Lucien, which occur in Paris and make a tale by themselves, are thus left for a separate publication. The novel, as we have it, then, belongs to the category of those scenes from provincial life which Balzac found so stimulating to his genius. This story, certainly, in some respects takes high rank among them. The character-drawing is fine: Lucien, the ambitious, handsome, weak-willed, selfish, and easily-sinning young bourgeois, is contrasted with David, — a touching picture of the struggling inventor, born of the people and sublimely one-purposed and pure in his life. Eve, the type of a faithful large-brained and larger-hearted wife, who supports her husband through all his hardships with unfaltering courage and kindness, is another noble creation. David inherits a poorish printing business from his skin-flint of a father, neglects it while devoting all his time and energy to his discovery of an improved method of making paper; and through the evil machinations of the rival printing firm of the Cointets, as well as the debts foisted on him by Lucien in Paris, he is brought into money difficulties and even into prison. But his invention, although sold at a sacrifice to the cunning Cointets, gets him out of the hole at last, and he and his good wife retire on a comfortable competency, which is augmented at the death of his father into a good-sized fortune. The seamy side of law in the provinces is shown up in Balzac's keen, inimitable way in the description of the winding of the coils around the unsuspecting David and the depiction of such men as the brothers Cointets and the shrewd little petifogging rascal, Petit Claud. The pictures of Angouleme aristocratic circles, too, with Lucien as high priest, are vivacious, and show the novelist's wonderful observation in all ranks of life. The bit of wild romance by which Lucien becomes the secretary of a Spanish grandee lends a fairy-tale flavor to the main episodes. Balzac, in whom is united the most lynx-eyed realism and the most extravagant romanticism, is ever and always one of the great masters in fiction of our century.

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A Great Man of the Provinces in Paris.

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Being the second part of "Lost Illusions." Translated by Katharine Prescott Wormeley. 12mo. Half Russia. Price, $1.50.

We are beginning to look forward to the new translations of Balzac by Katharine Wormeley almost as eagerly as to the new works of the best contemporary writers. But, unlike the writings of most novelists, Balzac's novels cannot be judged separately. They belong together, and it is impossible to understand the breadth and depth of the great writer's insight into human life by reading any one volume of this remarkable series. For instance, we rise from the reading of this last volume feeling as if there was nothing high or noble or pure in life. But what would be more untrue than to fancy that Balzac was unable to appreciate the true and the good and the beautiful! Compare "The Lily of the Valley" or "Seraphita" or "Louis Lambert" with "The Duchesse of Langeais" and "Cousin Bette," and then perhaps the reader will be able to criticise Balzac with some sort of justice. — *Boston Transcript.*

Balzac paints the terrible verities of life with an inexorable hand. The siren charms, the music and lights, the feast and the dance, are presented in voluptuous colors — but read to the end of the book! There are depicted with equal truthfulness the deplorable consequences of weakness and crime. Some have read Balzac's "Cousin Bette" and have pronounced him immoral; but when the last chapter of any of his novels is read, the purpose of the whole is clear, and immorality cannot be alleged. Balzac presents life. His novels are as truthful as they are terrible. — *Springfield Union.*

Admirers of Balzac will doubtless enjoy the mingled sarcasm and keen analysis of human nature displayed in the present volume, brought out with even more than the usual amount of the skill and energy characteristic of the author. — *Pittsburgh Post.*

The art of Balzac, the wonderful power of his contrast, the depth of his knowledge of life and men and things, this tremendous story illustrates. How admirably the rise of the poet is traced; the *crescendo* is perfect in gradation, yet as inexorable as fate! As for the fall, the effect is more depressing than a personal catastrophe. This is a book to read over and over, an epic of life in prose, more tremendous than the blank verse of "Paradise Lost" or the "Divine Comedy." Miss Wormeley and the publishers deserve not congratulations alone, but thanks for adding this book and its predecessor, "Lost Illusions," to the literature of English. — *San Francisco Wave.*

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BALZAC IN ENGLISH.

THE BROTHERHOOD OF CONSOLATION.

(*L'ENVERS DE L'HISTOIRE CONTEMPORAINE.*)

By HONORÉ DE BALZAC.

1. Madame de la Chanterie. 2. The Initiate. Translated by Katharine Prescott Wormeley. 12mo. Half Russia. Price, $1.50.

There is no book of Balzac which is informed by a loftier spirit than "L'Envers de l'Histoire Contemporaine," which has just been added by Miss Wormeley to her admirable series of translations under the title, "The Brotherhood of Consolation." The title which is given to the translation is, to our thinking, a happier one than that which the work bears in the original, since, after all, the political and historical portions of the book are only the background of the other and more absorbing theme, — the development of the brotherhood over which Madame de la Chanterie presided. It is true that there is about it all something theatrical, something which shows the French taste for making godliness itself histrionically effective, that quality of mind which would lead a Parisian to criticise the coming of the judgment angels if their entrance were not happily arranged and properly executed; but in spite of this there is an elevation such as it is rare to meet with in literature, and especially in the literature of Balzac's age and land. The story is admirably told, and the figure of the Baron Bourlac is really noble in its martyrdom of self-denial and heroic patience. The picture of the Jewish doctor is a most characteristic piece of work, and shows Balzac's intimate touch in every line. Balzac was always attracted by the mystical side of the physical nature; and it might almost be said that everything that savored of mystery, even though it ran obviously into quackery, had a strong attraction for him. He pictures Halpersohn with a few strokes, but his picture of him has a striking vitality and reality. The volume is a valuable and attractive addition to the series to which it belongs; and the series comes as near to fulfilling the ideal of what translations should be as is often granted to earthly things. — *Boston Courier.*

The book, which is one of rare charm, is one of the most refined, while at the same time tragic, of all his works. — *Public Opinion.*

His present work is a fiction beautiful in its conception, just one of those practical ideals which Balzac nourished and believed in. There never was greater homage than he pays to the book of books, "The Imitation of Jesus Christ." Miss Wormeley has here accomplished her work just as cleverly as in her other volumes of Balzac. — *N. Y. Times.*

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ROBERTS BROTHERS, Boston.

Balzac in English.

THE VILLAGE RECTOR.

By Honoré de Balzac.

Translated by Katharine Prescott Wormeley. 12mo. Half Russia. Price, $1.50.

Once more that wonderful acquaintance which Balzac had with all callings appears manifest in this work. Would you get to the bottom of the engineer's occupation in France? Balzac presents it in the whole system, with its aspects, disadvantages, and the excellence of the work accomplished. We write to-day of irrigation and of arboriculture as if they were novelties; yet in the waste lands of Montagnac, Balzac found these topics; and what he wrote is the clearest exposition of the subjects.

But, above all, in "The Village Rector" is found the most potent of religious ideas, — the one that God grants pardon to sinners. Balzac had studied and appreciated the intensely human side of Catholicism and its adaptiveness to the wants of mankind. It is religion, with Balzac, "that opens to us an inexhaustible treasure of indulgence." It is true repentance that saves.

The drama which is unrolled in "The Village Rector" is a terrible one, and perhaps repugnant to our sensitive minds. The selection of such a plot, pitiless as it is, Balzac made so as to present the darkest side of human nature, and to show how, through God's pity, a soul might be saved. The instrument of mercy is the Rector Bonnet, and in the chapter entitled "The Rector at Work" he shows how religion "extends a man's life beyond the world." It is not sufficient to weep and moan. "That is but the beginning; the end is action." The rector urges the woman whose sins are great to devote what remains of her life to work for the benefit of her brothers and sisters, and so she sets about reclaiming the waste lands which surround her chateau. With a talent of a superlative order, which gives grace to Veronique, she is like the Madonna of some old panel of Van Eyck's. Doing penance, she wears close to her tender skin a haircloth vestment. For love of her, a man has committed murder and died and kept his secret. In her youth, Veronique's face had been pitted, but her saintly life had obliterated that spotted mantle of smallpox. Tears had washed out every blemish. If through true repentance a soul was ever saved, it was Veronique's. This work, too, has afforded consolation to many miserable sinners, and showed them the way to grace.

The present translation is to be cited for its wonderful accuracy and its literary distinction. We can hardly think of a more difficult task than the Englishing of Balzac, and a general reading public should be grateful for the admirable manner in which Miss Wormeley has performed her task. — *New York Times.*

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ROBERTS BROTHERS, Boston, Mass.

Balzac in English.

MEMOIRS OF TWO YOUNG MARRIED WOMEN.

By Honoré de Balzac.

Translated by Katharine Prescott Wormeley. 12mo. Half Russia. Price, $1.50.

"There are," says Henry James in one of his essays, "two writers in Balzac, — the spontaneous one and the reflective one, the former of which is much the more delightful, while the latter is the more extraordinary." It is the reflective Balzac, the Balzac with a theory, whom we get in the "Deux Jeunes Mariées," now translated by Miss Wormeley under the title of "Memoirs of Two Young Married Women." The theory of Balzac is that the marriage of convenience, properly regarded, is far preferable to the marriage simply from love, and he undertakes to prove this proposition by contrasting the careers of two young girls who have been fellow-students at a convent. One of them, the ardent and passionate Louise de Chaulieu, has an intrigue with a Spanish refugee, finally marries him, kills him, as she herself confesses, by her perpetual jealousy and exaction, mourns his loss bitterly, then marries a golden-haired youth, lives with him in a dream of ecstasy for a year or so, and this time kills herself through jealousy wrongfully inspired. As for her friend, Renée de Maucombe, she dutifully makes a marriage to please her parents, calculates coolly beforehand how many children she will have and how they shall be trained; insists, however, that the marriage shall be merely a civil contract till she and her husband find that their hearts are indeed one; and sees all her brightest visions realized, — her Louis an ambitious man for her sake and her children truly adorable creatures. The story, which is told in the form of letters, fairly scintillates with brilliant sayings, and is filled with eloquent discourses concerning the nature of love, conjugal and otherwise. Louise and Renée are both extremely sophisticated young women, even in their teens; and those who expect to find in their letters the demure innocence of the Anglo-Saxon type will be somewhat astonished. The translation, under the circumstances, was rather a daring attempt, but it has been most felicitously done. — *The Beacon.*

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